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THE PORTUGUESE EAST INDIA COMPANY :
1754-1756

A PERSONAL NARRATIVE FOUND AMONG THE GALLWEY PAPERS

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Let me say quite frankly at the outset that there is but an indirect and tenuous connection between the subject matter of this paper and Article II of the Lisbon Historical Association's Constitution.

Nevertheless I take refuge under Article IX, in which it is laid down that «members will be free to pursue any line of research by which they are attracted.» Whether the subject matter here set forth will be equally attractive to my fellow members is for them to decide.

Just how the folio letter book, bound in coarse seaman's canvas, found its way into the Gallwey archives I have not been able to discover.

Probably it came from the Mordaunt family connection, though my only reason for saying so is based on the last two or three letters in the book, wherein the writer observes that she will be living in retirement at her quinta near Coimbra. I cannot trace any financial or other connections, in the Gallwey-Power papers that have been entrusted to the care of the Association, with M. de Rocquefiul, or with his principal,

Senhor Feliciano Velho Oldemberg, or Oldembourg, both spellings being found.

The cover of the letter-book is inscribed, with bold hand-written block printing : — «Copie de Lettres pour Mr. Rocquef. Commencè en 1754.»

Obviously the work of an East Indian *krani* or clerk unfamiliar with the niceties of the French language and its accents.

Stout rag paper, with a Dutch watermark and but little yellowed by age, there are 116 pages closely filled with what are clearly the rough drafts of M. Rocquefiul's correspondence. Some letters are in French, but the majority are in Portuguese, dated usually from some Far Eastern port and written to other ports in India or to Macao, with a certain number of lengthy reports to Lisbon. Now and again I had turned the pages idly, reading here a bit and there a bit as fancy led.

Not until May of this year did I realize that in this old, travel-stained book lies the major part, if not the whole, of the overseas story of that short-lived Cia Portuguesa da India, told in the correspondence of the man sent overseas in the ship *Santa Ana Rainha de Portugal* to establish the Company's connections in the East, from the Malabar coast to Macao.

A brief general survey of the period covered by the letters, and some observations on the principal persons to whom the correspondence with Lisbon is addressed, may be useful. For between the 22 February 1755, which is the date of the first letter — written from Colombo, with a brief account of the outward passage of the *Santa Ana Rainha de Portugal* — down to the 28th February, 1759, date of the last communication in the book, many and grave events occurred, including the Lisbon earthquake of 1st November 1755. Indeed, as will be subsequently seen, it was this catastrophe which completed the failure of the Company almost before its trading connections had been well established.

Pombal, or as he then was, Sebastião José de Carvalho, had granted the East India concession to Feliciano Velho Oldembourg, in 1754. It was clearly intended to establish a com-

ce was very much in the ascendent and English trade not disposed to welcome competition, come it from whence it may.

Moreover, though few of those who lived in 1754 grasped the fact, fresh breezes were already blowing over Europe and westwards to the Americas, while the political barometer had begun the steady downward movement which foretold the intellectual and material tornado of the French revolution. Russian jealousy of the dangerous growth of Prussia; the Family Compact; England's treaty with Frederick; the disastrous opening phases of the Seven Years War; all these, and many other factors, paved the road to changes greater than any man could foresee. In France, Louis XV, aided and abetted by the Duc de Choiseul, had embarked on a policy of aggression reminiscent of Louis XIV. England, under George II, saw Pitt dismissed for opposing the grant of subsidies to Russia and to Hesse with the object of obtaining their support for the kingdom of Hanover. In America, where Braddock and Washington made no headway against the genius and diplomacy of Montcalm, the seeds of revolt were being sown. Portugal too, nominally ruled by José Emmanuel but effectively directed and controlled by the dynamic force of Pombal, was apparently freeing itself from the sloth and perverted mysticism prevalent between 1715 and 1755 when, as one historian aptly says, «never was the Portuguese Crown richer and rarely had the kingdom prospered less.»

Pedro Felipe Rocquefiul, and his wife, sailed from Lisbon on the 26th June 1754, aboard the vessel *Santa Ana Rainha de Portugal*. They eventually reached Goa on the 26th March 1755; a long passage even for those days!

From a letter addressed to a M. Gendron, merchant, at Paris, which bears date, — Goa, 25th January 1756, — a few personal details about the writer are given. He asks his correspondent to try and obtain whatever papers may be needed to enable him to re-enter France without incurring the risk of arrest as a deserter. Rocquefiul there says that he was born in the diocese of Alby, near Bordeaux, in 1714 or 15, joined the marine regiment in 1729 and deserted the same year, crossing the frontier into Spain.

His commanding officers are named, the Colonel, La Frette, and the captain of his company, de Mazière. He thinks the affair can be arranged in the Ministry of War for a matter of 20 moïdores or so and asks M. Gendron to reimburse himself for any outlay by drawing on their mutual friend, M. Jacome Ratton, the well-known Lisbon merchant.

In the opening paragraphs of this letter M. Rocquefiul says that whereas he meant to make a long stay out East, hoping to have found some decent society and at least a few honest folk, he now intends to return to Europe within two or three years, since «a decent person is harder to find here than is the phoenix». There is no indication, in this or in any of the other letters, that he had previously been East.

One is inclined to think he must have been in Oldembourg's employ, proved able, industrious, and worthy of all confidence, being on this account sent to India to lay the administrative foundation on which the new Company would operate. «Here we are, after an unduly long voyage, none the pleasanter for being made in a Portuguese ship». Then comes the remark about the Phoenix, some pungent comments on the deported individuals «apart from whom one might have expected to find a few honest folk», and the explanation, «which «is why I have asked to be replaced and, knowing as I do «how the Portuguese conduct their navigation I shall try and «return by a French, an English, or a Dutch vessel.»

Not, it must be allowed, a letter of good omen for the successful outcome of the new undertaking!

Certainly that passage out was something to remember. He gives the Director General, Senhor Feliciano Velho Oldembourg, a preliminary report dated at Colombo, 22 January 1755. They had rounded the Cape of Good Hope on 21st September, thereafter standing sou'west for the islands of St. Paul and Amsterdam, which they appear to have sighted.

By the 3rd November their position gave them 10°56' S and 113°8' longitude, which, as a glance at the map will show, is nearer Java than India. Indeed the captain appears to have suggested that some Java port might be visited, and called a

council to decide on the route to follow. Rocquefiul is most indignant about «the two ignorant English mates, and the still more ignorant captain who took their advice.»

Apparently they stretched right over to the mouth of the Sunda strait, anchoring off the Ilha do Príncipe, where they could only pick up a few fowls and some turtles for the benefit of their 56/60 sick, though a Dutch ship bound to Ceylon sold them 15 sacks of Rice, and they decided to sail in her company when she left on the 15th December. From Colombo, reached on the 22 January, it took them two more months to reach Goa, calling en route at Cochim and Mahé on the west coast of what is now the Madras presidency. They are late for the monsoon, the *guarda-costas* that ought to have convoyed them to Goa had not arrived, so Rocquefiul, anxious to save time and prepare for the early disposal of the *Santa Ana's* cargo, sent off sundry letters to the Company's factors both on the Coromandel coast and in Bengal. Miguel Lely, Raimundo Jalama, Manuel dos Santos Lopes were evidently already in touch with the Oldembourg organization for Coromandel interests, while Thomas Vienne and Roberto Paslay are named as the Bengal factors.

The immediate problem is to liquidate a cargo originally meant for Surat and consisting of lead, quicksilver, cloth, English serafins and other goods. Once sold, the proceeds are to be used to buy cotton and arrack.

From Mahé, where the *Santa Ana* arrived by the beginning of March, he addresses a note to M. de Léry, Governor and Commander General in Chief of all French establishments in the East Indies, President of the Supreme Council, Chevalier of the Royal Order of St. Louis, resident at Pondicherry. I have summarised this letter here inasmuch as it gives a clear outline of the whole project : —

M. Rocquefiul trusts that the natural generosity of the French nation, and a realization that the new Company for China and India recently formed in Lisbon will harm no French interests, warrants him in counting on amicable treatment, the more so seeing that he, a French subject, has been appointed as Director in the Indies. Regeneration of Portuguese trade and

credit is the aim sought, the more so since both have long been in a languishing condition. Prices of all classes of merchandise have risen exceedingly, principally woven goods and silks. Provided that they are brought in Portuguese ships the entry of such goods is permissible, and the advantageous situation of the port of Lisbon, with its trade to Brasil, the Spanish West Indies, and the African coast, augurs a continuous and profitable exchange of merchandise. Reference is made to an opposition proposal and the despatch from Lisbon of a ship each year for the next three years to the Coromandel coast. This for account of MM. Labourdonnais & Grenier, and the first ship was even now in Indian seas. But Portuguese merchants having raised objections, that particular concession was cancelled, and the same privileges offered to M. Feliciano Velho Oldembourg, a famous and very able Portuguese merchant. A translation of the Royal Decree is enclosed «lest Your Excellency should not «know Portuguese». «Your Excellency will see that M. Oldembourg is granted permission to send his ship *Nossa Senhora da Boa Esperança*, of 700 tons, from Lisbon to Macao, with a cargo valued at 1,311,878 livres tournois, having leave to call at Brasil both outwards and homewards». Certain privileges are granted on homeward cargo, but the ship must bring back the Bishop of Macao and his suite, also 2 tons of merchandise «for the use of the silk factory». Terms are arranged for passage and freight. So much for the China trade, but permission is also granted to Oldembourg to send a ship annually to Goa for the next 10 years as well as to have ships trading on the coast ; two ships, each about 450 ton, are already here.

As regards the Lisbon ships they are under the obligation to load 80 tons ammunition and 100 soldiers for transport to Goa, at His Majesty's charges which will be arranged later. Meanwhile M. Oldembourg has decided to build two large ships of 1,200-1,500 tons armed with 50 guns, the first of these vessels being ready and the second on the stocks.

One will leave Lisbon next March for Goa. A third small vessel will be obtained to carry on the China trade. The first of the three small ships *Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres*, of about 700 tons, left Lisbon for China on the 1 April 1754, her cargo being valued at 561,815 livres tournois ; the second, named *S. José, Rey de Portugal* 450 tons, left on 3rd April, her cargo

being valued at 169,458 livres and her destination Coromandel and Bengal ; the third, in which I arrived, is the *Santa Ana*, *Raynha de Portugal* of 450 tons and bound for Goa. Her cargo is valued at 1,711,413 livres, to be used where most profitable and the bulk of her lading being in gold, silver and piastres, the balance in wines, brandies, mercury, iron, leal, steel, cloth, and hardware. Ships and their stores, equipment, etc., are not included in the value of the cargoes, and with the ships have come the factors and clerks required to open up such establishment as may be necessary in Bengal, Coromandel, and other parts of India, many of these people being at present in my charge at Goa, foreigners for the most part. Here, Sir, you have an outline giving the capital value and the intentions of this newly-established company, which will be further reinforced by the first big ship to leave Lisbon in March 1755, followed by another in March 1756.

This will bring the capital employed to a total of over 10 million livres torunois, chiefly supplied by a single merchant without drawing on his private capital or on that of his children. Thereafter M. Rocquefiul enlarges on how necessary it is both to Senhor Oldembourg and himself to have the friendship and confidence of the Governor, and he closes his letter by offering to accept of any funds His Excellency may care to entrust to the Company at interest, the terms to be generous.

At need he will himself visit Pondicherry.

Interesting also is the Memorandum drawn up for the guidance of the factors who are to leave for China on the ship *Prazeres*. Their names were Cayetano José de Sousa and Félix Milner. Art. 1 enjoins them, after leaving Goa, to keep close company with the *Santa Ana de Portugal*, now armed as a corsair. This for mutual defence if attacked by enemies and to hold good until the ship is off Cape Cormorin. From that point each vessel follows its own route, the *Santa Ana* standing up the Bay of Bengal bound for Pondicherry and Chandernagore while the *Prazeres* would take an almost due easterly course to the Malay Peninsula, then always styled Malacca. The factors were instructed to put in at Kedah and there to buy rice and rattans, or any other cargo deemed suitable for China.

Freight for Canton or Macao might also be accepted if profitable but no time was to be lost in waiting for it.

NOTE. — *The opening article is interesting as exemplifying the general fear then prevailing concerning Angria, the Mahratta pirate whose fleet of fast galley-like craft worked up and down the Coromandel coast from their port of Gheria, barely 100 miles N. of Goa. Their raids were particularly severe in 1755 ; it was just a year later that «Colonel» Clive — as he then was — working in conjunction with a squadron under Admiral Watson, took Gheria and effectively broke both Angria and the Mahratta power on the west coast.*

Article 4. of the Memorandum then tells them to have the course set for Macao-Canton. Immediately on arrival to find out how prices are ruling and begin to trade in accordance with the instructions of the Director General. If tea and porcelain are as dear as they were last year, that is doubtless due to the large number of ships that arrived from Europe ; it also explains the low prices obtainable at home, due to excessive stocks. Therefore if a long wait for such goods is needed, put your capital into other lines, remembering that you must be back in Cochin by November, when I expect the next big ship from Europe. So, seeing that the Company is well stocked with tea and porcelains, buy good silks or similar merchandise, gather all the prices you can and at the same time find out what is the most suitable merchandise for the Malabar coast. Strict obedience «to the rules of the sea» is to be insisted upon and all breaches thereof severely punished. The Memorandum ends with a note to the effect that «o veador da fazenda» in Lisbon would like a few rare birds of various kinds from China. Then follows a list of special items desired, ranging from silks to «12 chairs with a table to match, «cousa boa». All to be the best that can be had as they are «mimos de pessoas grandes.»

So off sails the *Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres* and M. Rocquefiul turns to the Indian trade anew. The pirates are his constant preoccupation, and he authorizes the Cochin agent to take convoy from French, English, or Dutch ships, paying the necessary charges. The royal ships cannot be counted upon, though one is said to be lading with wood for the King and

pepper for the Queen, and perhaps that vessel might provide escort, thus saving convoy charges.

On the 23rd January 1756 he writes from Goa a lengthy but most interesting letter to Feliciano Velho Oldembourg, being of course unaware of the calamity that befell Lisbon in the previous November. Again he cites the trouble that marked the voyage out, due, so he says, to the obstinacy and ignorance of the English «pilotos». They should be dismissed, but unfortunately there is nobody to replace them and, to make matters worse, their demand to be paid «in money of Portugal» and not in Goa currency had to be conceded. There is a great lack of sailors, all being taken up by the royal ships. He complains that various representatives of the Company are preferring their own private interests and mentions that two of them, José Jalama and José da Silva Fragoso, tried to persuade him to share with them a surtax or commission of 5 % on all transactions.

He cites one man, Pedro Levallois, as a good book-keeper, alludes to the trouble experienced in housing the staff, says a lot about the trouble created by Felipe de Valadare, «the most envious man in all India and a bitter enemy of the Company», has little good to say about people at Goa and suggests that it would pay to build premises for staff and stores at Pangim, which is close at hand. He goes on to recommend that the *Praseres* be armed as a corsair and sent with another ship when on the China run. It might be possible to capture Japanese vessels at need as it is feared that they may be beforehand and take all Portuguese persons now established in Macao and Canton. There are also some comments about the position of the Dutch but it is all rather involved and seems to be mostly founded on hearsay. One recommendation is interesting, namely his suggestion that the Company should use the Jesuits as its «comisarios» throughout India, the factors to hand them all funds and carry out their orders in the matter of finance. There is also a complaint about the factor at Surat being a Jew and having bought his charge from some person unspecified for 10,000 cruzadoes. This person is described as a great enemy of the Christians and a protégé of Valadares. He also sports the royal arms over his door.

There is much bitter criticism of the residents in Goa, both civil and religious, and it is evident that everybody connected with what are described as «the ships of the Crown» had no desire to see the new Company flourish. Lascaris to serve on the coast are sought from Damaun, and a suggestion is made about the advisability of setting up a base port at S. Tomé on the Coromandel coast where, says the writer, the native princes are well disposed to Europeans and where there would be less need to provide for convoy services. The Lascar seamen are much cheaper than Europeans but they ask for a 3 months advance of pay.

It was no easy task that confronted M. Rocquefiul, this opening up of an orderly coastal trade that was to build up cargoes with which to load the ships from Lisbon, when they arrived. Seldom does one come across a personal note; the man appears to have been wholly wrapped up in his affairs, a zealous and faithful servant, or perhaps a partner, of the new organization. One letter there is, dated at Goa, 25th January 1756 and addressed «to Monsieur Ratton, merchant, at Lisbon,» in which slight vestiges of individual dissatisfaction are found. After discussing the chances of war and peace, in Europe and in the East, and the poor state of trade, he continues «I am pleased to hear that opera and the play, to say nothing of music, are so satisfactory with you, but I wish that Justice, Discipline, and good commercial management were cultivated with equal zeal and care. Matters are ten times worse here than in Lisbon, and I am very glad to have taken all necessary steps to get away from it as soon as possible.» After further discussion of the state of markets the writer asks to be remembered to friends at Coimbra and Viseu.

On the same date a letter is addressed to Martinho Velho Oldembourg in which he conveys the greetings of his wife, senhora Leonarda, to the ladies Francisca and Gertrudes, whose commissions he will have much pleasure in carrying out. Agates, amethysts, and two strings of pearls, together with a couple of young Canarim servants knowing some Portuguese, were the chief items sought by the ladies. The latter could not be bought locally; he would therefore get a boy and girl from where they were sold, young enough to be taught the language.

From a letter written to M. Boucard, merchant, at Surat, dated at Goa, 24th January 1756, one learns that two ships, fully loaded with goods of Bengal and the Coromandel coast have just been despatched for Europe, while a third, presumably the *nau Prazeres*, turns up from China five days after they had sailed. Part of her cargo was unloaded but the tea, repacked, went forward, together with sundry Indian goods, including cotton and arrack, and as the *Prazeres* is a fast sailer she is expected to reach Portugal in company with the other two vessels. There is mention of the possible liquidation of a consignment of cowries held at Surat for Rocquefiul's account, and an invoice of the China goods that may be suitable for disposal at Surat will be sent when shipping is available, probably by a patamar, which was a light native craft much used in those days for carrying despatches.

Very interesting too is the lengthy letter which went to Félix Velho Oldembourg aboard the ships *São José* and *Santa Ana*, the two vessels above mentioned. Summarised, it reads thus: — There is a resumé of all that has occurred since Rocquefiul wrote from Mahé on 26 February 1755 down to 20th January 1756. He was offered the ruined fort of Pangim, which was quite unsuitable either for storing goods or housing staff. He managed to rent a property through the good offices of one of the Jesuit Fathers at 600 Xerafins a year, equal to 120\$, money of Portugal. This was rebuilt at considerable cost, which the Fathers refused to reimburse.

Then come details of trouble with ships and cargo, especially with the tea loaded on the *Prazeres*. Severe storms damaged the roof of the storehouse but fortunately no damage was done to the tea. Detail of purchases in Malacca, and surprise is expressed at the fact of the Bengal factors keeping the ship for a whole year. Living very poor at Goa, and more costly than any other part of India. Employees lodge protest, which is enclosed. Also certificate of number of soldiers landed alive here and at Mozambique, pay receipts, voyage accounts and other details. Tea is loaded because it is better not kept in store for another wet season. European crews are small and Lascaris don't want to go to Europe. So as the Viceroy says no men available, being required for ships of the Crown, they fill up with such deserters as they can get, plus 20 negroes, which

they bought, putting 10 on each ship, the cost being included in sundry expenditures. Attention is drawn to the fact that there are abundant stores on both ships and that therefore they need not call anywhere before reaching the island of Fayal.

Of supplementary interest to the above is the transcription of a letter from the Macao factor, Félix Milner, who came to Cochin with the ship *Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres*, arriving on the 30th January 1756. He touches on sundry staff matters, mentions that the assistant José Alexandre goes home with the ship to give an account of the China trade and with him goes as passenger José Plácido de Brito, a book-keeper from the Goa establishment, whose services are no longer required. There's reference to the ship's lading, which includes 15 bales belonging to an Armenian merchant of Bengal, which gave trouble enough at the *Alfândega*. Marks and numbers as p.B/lading. The crew is brought up to strength by purchasing 14 slaves, twelve being Caffres and two from Timor. It is also noted that «M. Dupleix has left the Coromandel coast for France, hence we shall use your L/Introduction for M. De Lery, Director General of the French Company at Pondicherry.

Ships disbursements may seem heavy, but she is well equipped and stored: therefore unnecessary to call anywhere before Fayal.

Meanwhile the Company is bare of ready money; has indeed had to borrow on pledges in order to complete the loading of the ships. There are more letters on staff matters, Félix Milner returning to Macao as the Company has no post for him in India and, there being no precise orders about the China staff it was not advisable to insist on his return to Europe. He is described as «good and intelligent, and zealous in the Company's service.» In May 1756 Rocquefiul writes to Milner to tell him that he has shipped 1,500 shark fins in 15 bales, and that 7,500 have already been shipped. Proceeds are to be employed in accordance with the directions of Ana Maria *sua serva* and shipped to Padre Duarte, factor at Calicut. As for himself, he has had a narrow escape from death. The roof of his varandah fell on him, beams and all. He was pinned down and injured back and sides but is now much better.

By the end of July, 1756, the news as a whole is bad, and Rocquefiul learns for the first time of the Lisbon earthquake. For the moment however local events call for more immediate attention and in a letter to M. Louit, the Company's Mahé factor he informs him that the Viceroy — «the worst and least capable person that could have been appointed» — has begun a war, as unjust as it is badly planned, against Scinde, in an attempt to capture the fort of Ponda. With unwilling officers and troops, and no precautions taken against a sortie by the enemy, the nett result was 90 Portuguese killed and 150 wounded, with all baggage and artillery lost and the Viceroy numbered among the dead. Thus, he rather naively explains, the state is out of danger inasmuch as the Archbishop, Chancellor, and Philip de Valadares are the Governors named in the Letter of Succession and their love of peace portends tranquillity. He has however heard, via Bombay, that war has broken out between France and England. The English have captured already two warships and over 90 merchant vessels.

«So it starts», he parenthetically exclaims. Going on to say that the French are issuing letters of marque and have already «given it fresh» to the English in Canada, while a fleet of 16 ships is on its way to India.

It is also said that there have been earthquakes in Holland, at Milan, and principally in Lisbon, causing strange ravages. But no details are given, «so if you have any particulars please pass them on». He hopes that so much bad news cannot be all true, adding that as far as one can see the ports and the flag of Portugal will be neutral in all these troubles.

Apparently Rocquefiul already had more news than he suggested in the above letter. For, writing to Pondicherry from Goa on the 20th July 1756 he refers to an article that appeared in the Gazette de Cologne dated, «Lisbonne, mois de Juin 1755». The anonymous writer there states that the Cie das Indes de Lisbonne had failed, as had all its predecessors, and that «Le Glorieux», which was being loaded for the outward voyage, could not leave for lack of funds. For which reason the ammunition and the passengers of His Majesty had been removed from the ship, as had the prisoners condemned to exile, these latter being either returned to the Limoeiro or discharged. This news must have been a sore blow. For in almost all the previous

correspondence Rocquefiul makes occasional reference to the early arrival of «Le Glorieux» with fresh Europe goods and additional capital funds. He continues by saying that «as we received orders to send home the 3 ships and all the funds we could raise, and as the vessel named has not arrived the bad news seems all too true.» He adds, «the English at Bombay have had news by overland route to the effect that in October (sic) «a terrible storm and earthquake occurred at Lisbon, with «over 100,000 people killed and half the city in ruins. It is hard «to believe that this is true, but even allowing for exaggeration «we are unlikely to see any ships of either the Company or His «Majesty. Let me have what news you can and do what you «can as the Company is obviously in great difficulties.»

On the 24th October 1756 he writes to the Surat factor to tell him that three of His Majesty's ships arrived here (Goa) on the 15th September confirming the bad news and bringing details. These do not differ from those generally quoted by contemporary writers and need not be repeated; he goes on to say that «the house of our Director General (Feliciano Velho Oldembourg) has also been burnt and he has saved nothing, not even his books, while his son Jean Velho was killed by a falling wall as he tried to escape. As a ship from China has recently arrived his loss is all the greater. It runs into millions. Thus a kingdom is ruined and the loss affects its neighbours also, principally England, our new Company being wiped out, as one might say, at its birth. I have had orders to liquidate everything as soon as possible and return to Europe.» Follow certain instructions regarding the sale of various goods, thanks for his account of «the misfortunes that the English have suffered»; presumably a reference to Surajah Dowlah's capture of Fort William and the events which led up to the tragedy of the Black Hole of Calcutta, 20/21 June 1756. Incidentally Rocquefiul regrets that he cannot send the pipe of white wine asked for, «as the English have bought up everything».

Subsequent letters advising the various factors and agents of the Company's distressing situation, coupled with instructions as to the best way of saving something from the wreck, show that M. Rocquefiul strove to do his duty to the last. An effort was made to buy a local vessel for the purpose of bringing coast cargo unsold down to Goa, but that seems to have fallen through

for lack of ready money. Also everything that could float and sail under a neutral flag was excessively dear. As for Macao, the only thing to do was to get a member of the Jesuit Order to take charge of the Company's interests, receive letters and funds in the absence of Cayetano de Souza and Félix Milner. He is, very naturally, chiefly concerned about the proceeds of his private venture in sharks' fins; the money, when received, is to be sent, in gold, to Goa, to his order. A last effort to get back goods that were in Pondicherry and Chinsura seems to have been made at the close of 1756; they were to be sold at auction and the proceeds remitted in bills on Amsterdam. From a letter addressed to Raymond Jalama, Manuel dos Santos Lopez and others at Pondicherry it would appear that some sort of a craft was eventually obtained, or built, the *San Felipe* commanded by Domingos de Faria e Cruz. Loaded with cowries, no other freight being obtainable, she carried Pedro Levallois as supercargo, not only because nobody else was available but also owing to his knowledge of navigation and ability to replace the commander and mate at need.

What the result of this voyage may have been there is nothing in the correspondence to show, but it is obvious that the end of the Company was at hand, and with its extinction there coincided the death of the man whose confidential correspondence I have tried to summarize. For the next letter to Senhor Feliciano Velho Oldembourg is dated 1 June 1758, at Bahia de todos os Santos and is written by Rocquefiul's widow.

She tells him that her late husband, after winding up the Company's affairs as well as he could, took passage with his servants and Pedro Levallois aboard a ship of the Crown, the *S. José* the captain being José Procópio. In bad health when they sailed from Goa, possibly due to that accident on his verandah to which previous reference was made, when they doubled the Cape of Good Hope, which they did on the 10th April, his state grew worse and worse until on the 14th May he died, only two days after the vessel's arrival at the Brazilian port. It was not possible to put him ashore, but his faculties were clear and he was able to make his will leaving his widow sole legatee — there do not seem to have been any children of the marriage — and charged with the duty of handing over all books and accounts relative to the Company's affairs, with the

aid of Pedro Levallois, book-keeper. There appears to have been some trouble with certain of the Company's agents and threats of legal proceedings, but, says the widow, everything will be cleared up when she hands over her late husband's papers, and the books. She continues «in order to assure you that no attempt has been made to tamper with the accounts, my husband handed them to the ship's purser (*escrivão*) for delivery to you. My own sorrows and afflictions do not allow me to discuss the Company's affairs at greater length, but Pedro Levallois will write to you the main essentials, pending such time as he can acquaint you verbally with what has been done.»

Follows a long letter from Levallois to Oldembourg. It is interesting, and, freely translated, with certain omissions and much summarising, runs thus: — «As you will have gathered from earlier letters of M. Rocquefiul I went aboard the ship that was intended to bring goods from Pondicherry and what little merchandise still remained in Bengal. Unfortunately we had bad weather right down to Point de Galle (Colombo) where we had to put in.

Another storm dismasted us off Trincomalee, but we patched things up as best we could, finally arriving at Pondicherry on the 3rd April, that is 63 days after leaving Goa. It was necessary to re-mast and repair the ship, and, the change of monsoon setting in shortly, it was advisable to get back as soon as possible to the Malabar coast. At Pondicherry however there was not the material suitable to carry out repairs. So after many consultations, in which captain Domingos de Faria, the port pilots, and other well-informed persons took part, it was decided that to go back to Goa before October was out of the question and that therefore the best thing to do was to carry on for Bengal, repair the ship there, and then, having loaded with whatever merchandise remained, sail for the Coromandel coast in August. It might even be feasible to pick up a freight of grain or rice for Pondicherry, which would bring in some 3,000\$ towards expenses.»

NOTE. — This decision agrees with the course of the *S. W.* and *N. E.* monsoon winds; Levallois means that the passage up the Bay of Bengal from Pondicherry would be made carrying the last of the *S. W.* monsoon on their quarter, while on the

return journey they could count on an ever-freshening N. E. wind to take them down the Coromandel coast and round to Goa.

They took their departure from Pondicherry on the 27th April and arrived in Bengal on 26th May, 1757, only to learn that war had broken out between the English and the French and that the former had «taken and pillaged Chandernagore, maltreating also the Dutch and the Danes who were in Bengal». A few days later «the English broke their peace with the Nabob, joining forces with one of his discontented generals who was in revolt, and defeated the said Nabob. Thus he lost both the battle and his kingdom at one and the same time». This presumably relates to Clive's brilliant victory of Plassy on the 23rd June 1757. «A few days later», the letter continues, «they caught and decapitated him, making one of the insurgents Nabob and selling him the kingdom for 300 lacs of rupees» (a lac, as Levallois explains, is 100,000). Their vessel was thus forced to remain at Calcutta, where, thanks to the new treaty made with England, they were safe and able to repair and re-mast the ship ready to set sail at the end of August. Meanwhile Pasley, the Company's factor, together with another Englishman named Badem (sic) whose reputation in Calcutta was none too good, instead of helping Levallois did everything in his power to bring the party into the clutches of the Nabob and his fassedar, in order to curry favour with them, making objections to the handing over of the Company's goods. The matter went to the courts and eventually 30 bales were shipped on a Bill of Lading for Goa. Levallois goes on to say that «as the English are now masters of the Ganges and of all Bengal they are very arrogant and uppish in their prosperity. We had to put up with it, «nor would they let us load grain or rice, saying that they needed it and furthermore that they were not disposed to let it go to the Coromandel coast, where it might easily get into French hands». A remark that strikes a very modern note when you come to think it out in the light of present-day events! So they sailed in ballast, with a loss of 1,800 Rs. freight, carrying only 115 bales of raw silk to be discharged at Pulicat, in what is now the Madras Presidency, and, bad weather alternating with calms, they reached that port on the 9th October.

From thence to Pondicherry the distance is small, and they

sailed from there on the 15th October, had a fortnight of calms, arrived at Mahé on the 29th November and were forced to wait until the 30th December for convoy to Goa, which was reached on the 8th January 1758. «There», says Levallois, «I was informed of the injuries, calumnies, and frauds of which M. Rocquefiul had been the victim.» Indeed he does not hesitate to attribute his death to the trouble and worry with which he was pursued, and he lays emphasis on the fact that the documents which will be handed over by the widow, including as they do the current account of the Company, will clear up the whole matter and leave Rocquefiul's name untarnished.

The closing communications recorded in the book are interesting chiefly for the light they throw on ordinary commercial practice of the time.

Writing from Lisbon under date 12 February 1759 to Senhor Domingos Alves Branco at Bahia, the widow mentions that the passage from that port to Lisbon was without incident — save for a 5 days storm off Pará! — but unduly prolonged, taking 74 days, the vessel arriving in the Tagus on 4th December. Despite calumny and the opening of legal proceedings by what she describes as «our enemies», they were received in a friendly manner by Senhor Oldembourg, whereas he refused even to see the opposition and not even their claim for salaries was met, while their legal expenses recoiled on themselves. She gives Senhor Branco instructions to use certain funds, left with him during her stay at Bahia, in the purchase of the best white sugar, and leather, this produce being consigned to Messrs. Colombell and Neuville, of Remolares, Lisbon. They have her instructions regarding disposal of the goods, since she herself intends to leave for her quinta. Then, a week later, Mme. Rocquefiul writes to Félix Milner to Macao to find out what happened to those 1,500 shark fins, packed in 15 bales and sent aboard the vessel *Nossa Senhora da Luz*, captain Miguel Pedro Leytor, who called at Goa and Mangalore. «Please let me know whether they reached Macao safely and whether the proceeds were remitted in gold or in merchandise to the procurator for the China province of the Jesuit Fathers, resident at Goa. I shall be much obliged by your letting me know how matters stand.» Clearly Mme. Rocquefiul had a head for business, also the careful attention to small economies that is usually consid-

red the attribute of the French *bourgeoisie*. For her letter continues. «At the same time please see or write to your brother Maximo, reminding him that he owed my deceased husband 94 xerafins, for an error in the account covering a shipment of goods to Diu ; a matter about which my husband wrote to him shortly before leaving Goa.» The reply is to be addressed to Colombell and Neuville, and presumably the letter went by the hands of Senhor Cayetano José — «who can tell you all the news from here better than I can write it.» Probably there is more in that sentence than a mere disinclination for writing. Barely a month had gone by since the savage executions of the Távoras in the Pátio dos Bichos on the 13th January 1759, and Martinho Velho Oldembourg was a prisoner in the Junqueira fort. All Lisbon discussed these things, but under their breath ; it was not matter for comment in a private letter.

Nor is anything but the business in hand alluded to in the letter bearing the same date — and presumably to be delivered by the same hand — addressed to the procurator of the Jesuits at Macao. In it the whole business is detailed anew, with the same Lisbon merchants named as the address to which any reply should be sent, «as I am about to leave for my quinta near Coimbra.»

Does this last remark possibly offer a clue as to why this letter book should have found a place among the Gallwey papers ? The Mordaunts, with whom the Gallweys were connected by marriage, were resident at Coimbra and both they and the Gallweys of 1800-1825 had reasonably close connections with Paris. If Mme. Rocquefiul settled in that vicinity, what more likely than that she should come into contact with Henry Gallwey the banker and in course of time leave in his care this record of her late husband's ill-starred eastern voyage ? At any rate, there the story ends as far as the Rocquefiul connection is concerned, save for a sort of footnote afforded by a brief memorandum from Senhor Joaquim Félix de Aroyan Gomes, dated at «Campo Pequeno, 28th February 1759» and addressed to Pedro Levallois. It asks him to help towards a speedy closing of the accounts relative to goods arrived by the ship «Prateres».

Can he say, more or less, what was paid on such goods at

Goa? If exact figures are not available, make a rough reckoning and get Mme. Rocquefiul's signature to the account. Levallois, who seems to have been a good all-round man, and a careful accountant as well as a navigator, writes back immediately to say that an itemized account of the charges will be found in the rough cash book under date 10th November 1757. The account asked for was already signed by the widow and sent to Senhor Oldembourg «as you may gather from the list which I gave you.»

That the Company was finished in every sense is matter of history, and with it came the end of the Velho Oldembourg family's wealth and political importance. Martinho Velho Oldembourg, who in 1756 appears to have at any rate sympathised with a scheme then brewing which was to clip Pombal's wings, was in trouble, though like all Portuguese history of that era the matter is most obscure. What one does know is that he was sent to the Junqueira prison more or less at the same time that Diogo de Mendonça, Minister of Marine, and Teixeira de Mendonça, were arrested, the former being banished from court and the latter exiled to Angola, where he died. Velho Oldembourg, some time later, was also exiled, then brought back to Portugal and imprisoned at Peniche. At any rate he was dead before the death of King Joseph in 1777 was followed by that most remarkable gaol delivery, whereby some 800 political prisoners incarcerated by Pombal's orders were given their liberty, in some instances after over twenty years close confinement. This is however matter that can best be followed up in Portuguese historical writings. All that I have sought to do here is to recall, as succinctly as may be, the brief story of a commercial venture doomed, as we now know, from its very inception, even if its first year's trading had not coincided with that terrific natural cataclysm which stunned and, for a brief space of time, almost ended Lisbon's commercial prosperity, the earthquake and fire of the 1st November 1755.