

ACERVO DIGITAL FUNDAJ

The place of Camoens
in the literature:
address delivered before
the students of
the Yale University,
on the 14th
May, 1908

Fundação Joaquim Nabuco

www.fundaj.gov.br

ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE STUDENTS
OF YALE UNIVERSITY, ON THE 14TH MAY, 1908

THE PLACE OF CAMOENS
IN LITERATURE

By

JOAQUIM NABUCO

Ambassador of Brazil

082.1
N117p
AN/F

The Place of Camoens in Literature

GENTLEMEN OF YALE UNIVERSITY :

When I had read the *LUSIADS* for the first time, I at once wrote a book to tell of my wonder, offering for it the only apology that a tribute of love is always acceptable to a poet. I do not repent of having recorded in print that early impression, which has developed into years of faithful admiration and has kept company with my mind throughout life. Still I always intended to renew to Camoens on my decline the vow of my youth, and it is quite an unexpected fortune for me to be allowed to do it before a great American University.

While literary culture was chiefly under Latin influence the *LUSIADS* was sure of the place claimed for it by the Portuguese race. Now Culture is becoming more diffusely Anglo-German and still every sign is that, both in Anglo-Saxon and in German countries, its great fame will continue unchallenged. These, however, are hard times for the Classics, even for the favourite ones, and some reminder seems necessary for Camoens among the American students, to whom he has always been more or less a stranger, although introduced by Longfellow himself.

It is easy to show what a great poet Camoens is. It is enough to take the *LUSIADS* and read the episode of Ignez de Castro, or the episode of Adamastor, or the episode of the Isle of Love, but for that it is necessary that the audience understand Portuguese. Failing this condition, one must depend on the translator, on foreign help. To deprive a Poet of his language is to take away from him half his soul. Who could translate into

French or Italian Milton's *L'Allegro* or Shelley's *To a Skylark*, without a loss of what was dearest in either to them? Every great poet is great in any language, but none is ever as great in another as in his own, and the loss they suffer by translation may be so material as to affect their relative position in literature. That is the case with Camoens.

Speaking specially of him, he has before any audience not familiar with Portuguese many other disadvantages in a competition. He is above all his Nation's poet; that was not only his fate, it was also his ambition, and, as the poet of Portugal, he suffers from the want of general interest in the Portuguese race, in the part it played in history, in its individuality. The world is always charmed by the names of Greece, Rome, the Italian Republics of the Middle Ages, and that gives an additional lustre to the *Iliad*, the *Æneid*, the *Divine Comedy*. In everything fortune has its part, with nations as well as with men, and in nothing else as much as in fame. When the claim of a poet comes to be weighed, the charm of his own race should therefore be considered. Only an ancient Roman could say with real knowledge to what extent each of the three languages, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese, sounds like his Latin; certainly much of the mother tongue has been preserved in each of them that was effaced by use or disuse from the other two; still Portuguese is the neglected sister. That must be a case of historical prestige. Then the subject of the *LUSIADS*, the discovery of the East, appeals more to the European than to the American imagination. For the Americans Vasco da Gama is a secondary figure to that of Columbus. The true interest of Discovery centres for us in the crossing of the Atlantic and in the finding of America.

If we sum up the circumstances that will tell against Camoens abroad, we have: the general ignorance of the language in which he wrote; the too great loss he has suffered by translation; the lesser hold that Portugal has on the imagination of the world; the inferior interest of the Portuguese language on this account; and, lastly, the shade that Columbus casts, specially in the American mind, over Vasco da Gama, as heroes of the Age of Discovery. Do not think I am making my favourite appear so handicapped to withdraw him from the field. I stick to his colours. I only want to explain to you the indifference felt for the *LUSIADS* beyond the limits of the Portuguese language.

Since I mentioned the translators, I must assure you I do not intend to disparage them. Camoens would feel proud of their homage. They have all rendered much service to him. Richard Fanshaw's translation, printed in 1655, popularized the *LUSIADS* among the men of letters of the Restoration. It is the one that Milton must have read. That of Mickle was republished several times since 1776, and both Southey and Walter Scott called him a poet and a man of genius. What they did for the 17th and 18th centuries, Quillinan, unfortunately only in part, Aubertin and Richard F. Burton did for the 19th. Still we should not read any of them with the impression that we are reading Camoens himself. None is safe. All put much of their own in the poem. Another translator is needed who will not lend to the poet, but will let him appear entirely alone, without fearing for him. Whenever the rendering of a former translator should be found to be a perfect equivalent of the original in English verse, that ought to be saved. Once perfection is attained, one should simply copy it. Perfection is final. Such a

translation of the LUSIADS would reveal a much greater Camoens to the English speaking races. The master's own picture lies hidden for them under the work of his translators. Why should not this prose version come from Yale? You have the man: Professor Henry R. Lang. Portuguese, however, has such resemblance with Spanish and, although less, with Italian, that a reader of Cervantes or of Dante in the original would easily notice any sensible difference between the Portuguese text and the translation by comparing them.

I will give a stanza of the LUSIADS in Portuguese and in Italian to show the resemblance between the two languages and that of both with Latin. Camoens explains the love of Venus for the Portuguese, whom Bacchus wishes to destroy. I will read it first in English: "Against Bacchus stands the beautiful Venus, attached to the Lusitan race for the many qualities she found in it of her own beloved Romans: the stout hearts; the brilliant star, showed on the lands of Tanger; and the language, which, the more she thinks, the more appears to her, with slight change, to be the Latin." I, 33.

Sustentava contra elle Venus bella
Sosteneva contro dilui Venere bella
 Affeiçoada á gente Lusitana
Afezionata alla gente Lusitana
 Por quantas qualidades via nella
Per (tutte) quante (le) qualità vedeva in essa
 Da antiga tao amada sua Romana:
Della antica tanto amata sua (gente) Romana:
 Nos fortes corações, na grande estrella,
Nei forti cuori, nella grande stella,
 Que mostraram na terra Tingitana;
Que (essa) avea mostrata sulla terra Tingitana;
 E na lingua, na qual quanto imagina,
E nella lingua chè piú vi pensa (quanto imagina)
 Com pouca corrupcao crê que é a Latina.
Con poca (corruzione) diferenza crede che sia la Latina.

Let me say a short word for Portugal. Portugal is one of the Nations that play a leading part in History, that is, one of those which accomplish through their initiative some destiny of mankind. In a sense, all modern discoverers may be said to hail from the school of Sagres and to have had Prince Henry-the-Navigator for their patron. Not to speak of the earlier discoveries, like those of Madeira, the Azores, the Cabo Verde Islands, it was a Portuguese, Bartholomeu Dias, who converted the Cape of Tempests into the Cape of Good Hope; another, Vasco da Gama, who first reached India; another, Pedro Alvares Cabral, who discovered Brazil, and to another, Magellan, belong the great honours of the circumnavigation of the Globe. Without the Portuguese discoveries you could not explain Columbus. The influence of the Portuguese navigators was certainly the greatest of all upon him; he must have learned sea-life under their teaching; he married the daughter of one of Prince Henry's captains; he lived for a time in Lisbon, and it was only by some yet unknown mystery that the honour of helping him to carry out his dream passed from King John II of Portugal to Ferdinand and Isabella. In 1580 however, such was then the force of the dynastic principle, Philip the Second of Spain succeeded to the throne of Portugal and the Nation disappeared.

It was a providential accident that the *LUSIADS* was published on the very eve of the country's death. The result, sixty years later, was the resurrection of the nationality, all over the seas, almost intact, and in parts, as in Brazil, even aggrandised. Between 1572, the year of the Poem's birth, and 1640, when the Restoration took place, there had been issued in Lisbon no less than thirteen editions. The name alone was a na-

tional rallying cry. The master-piece raised between the two races of the Peninsula an intellectual frontier, such as *Don Quijote* would have raised in favour of Spain, had Portugal been the dominating Power. No doubt the spirit of Nationality was also kept alive by the legend of Dom Sebastiam, whose return the Portuguese nation expected during centuries; but Sebastianism was, to a great extent, a creation of the *LUSIADS*, its first creation.

Vasco da Gama's voyage is only the episode of the Poem; the divinity to whom it is consecrated, its collective hero, is "the noble Lusian breast, whom both Neptune and Mars obeyed."

". . . . o peito illustre Lusitano,
A quem Neptuno e Marte obedeceram."

He sings all those who by valorous deeds free themselves from the Law of Death:

"Aquelles que por obras valerosas
Se vão da lei da morte libertando."

Like every true national Poem, the *LUSIADS* is cyclical. Its fragments are the nation's legends, each appearing the chief one while it is sung. The national feeling was so strong with the Poet that, both on beginning and on closing his Poem, he is thinking of another great event to sing. The title would admit as many more *cantos* as might be the Portuguese heroic undertakings. Even some other might continue the Poem, if his equal could be found.

This is the first great impression of the *LUSIADS*: Country-worship. The work is planned as the national

Monument. The men and women of Portuguese history are the statues, or medallions; the country's battles, the large frescoes; the voyage to India, the encircling frieze; the discovered seas and lands, the mosaic pavement. One must understand that the Poem is both a national chapel and a national reliquaire, not to question the space given in it to Portuguese history alone. Camoens was a Portuguese before being a poet, as Dante was an Italian and Milton an Englishman. Much of his work is therefore bound to be indifferent to strangers. He meant it. Portions of it can only be appreciated with the Portuguese soul. In every great literary construction there is also, of necessity, a large part, which only forms the structure, the mass, the size of the work. You need not notice that; it is like the dark foliage, through which the flowers are scattered; the barren soil, that forms the cup of the emerald lake. Much more however of Portuguese history than he leaves, so to say, in state of ore, is converted by the Poet into perfect poetry by a single touch of legend or by a touch of Ideal. It is poetry in the *LUSIADS*, all throughout, the voyage of the ships of Vasco da Gama from Lisbon to India; it is poetry, its rendering of the origins of the Portuguese nation; her battles with Spain and with the Moors; the meeting of Queen Maria of Spain and her Father Dom Alfonso IV; the story of Dona Iñez de Castro; poetry, the ever so many epitaphs he writes for the brave who fell fighting for King and Country in distant parts; the itinerary of the envoys of Dom Joam II in search of the land-route to India; the figures he sculptured full size; it is poetry, each of his short drawings of Portuguese scenery, or of any far away domain of "the small Lusitanian home," "da pequena casa Lusitana." "In

Africa she holds maritime settlements; in Asia she is more sovereign than all; in the new fourth Part she cultivates the fields, and, if there was still more World, there she would reach." VII, 14.

The second great impression of the *LUSIADS* is that it is the Poem of the Sea. Camoens spent years of his life on the sea in times when sailing created an intimacy with it, both in calm and in tempest, quite unknown now that the reign of the winds has come to an end. That long, silent and deep communion shows itself in nearly every stanza of his. The *LUSIADS* is a Poem to be read on deck, under the sails. Its action passes on board-ship. Camoens drew from the ocean all the inspiration it contains and passed it to his readers. Alexander von Humbolt writes of him: "Camoens abounds in inimitable descriptions of the never ceasing interchange between the air and the sea, between the varying forms of the clouds, the transformation of the sky, and the different states through which passes the surface of the ocean. He is, in the strictest sense, a great sea-painter." You should read the whole passage in Humbolt's *Cosmos*. What strikes most in Camoens are not, however, so much the descriptions, remarkable for their accuracy and insight of Nature, in which the naturalist delights, as the touches, the solitary verses, that contain all the poetry of the sea. One feels as if on the sea itself, so much so that to read him is really like sailing, as far as imagination is concerned. Still nothing could be more simple than his style. See if you detect any artifice in these verses, remembering, however, that the old myths live in his heart and are his natural exclamations.

"The ships are now sailing over the wide ocean, parting the restless waves; the winds breath softly, and fill the hollow sails; the seas appear covered with white froth, as the prows cut through the consecrated maritime waters, where runs the flock of Proteus."—I, 19.

And again:

"The winds push them so gently as one who has the heaven for his friend; the air is serene, the skies appear without a cloud, or fear of danger; they have already passed the cape of Prasso, of ancient name, in the Ethiopic coast, and the sea uncovers before them the new isles that it encircles and is ever washing around."—I, 43.

In no Poem will you find more perfect pictures, in a few touches only, of the rising and setting of the sun, of the moonlight, of every aspect of the sea, of departure and return, of all that makes the sailor's life, till his burying in a wave.

"Quam facil é ao corpo a sepultura!
Quaesquer ondas do mar . . ."

—V, 83.

He will call the ships "swimming birds," *nadantes aves*. IV, 49.

What Portuguese ever saw the Tagus coast disappear in the horizon who did not keep the last impression fixed by Camoens? "Our sight is already little by little exiled from the home hills which remained; remained the dear Tagus and the cold heights of Cintra, and on them our eyes were stretching; there also remained the hearts which grief leaves behind, and when the beloved country was all hidden away, we saw nothing but sea and sky."

"Já a vista pouco e pouco se desterra
 D'aquelles patrios montes que ficavam:
 Ficava o caro Tejo e a fresca serra
 De Cintra, e nella os olhos se alongavam;
 Ficava-nos tambem na amada terra
 O coração, que as magoas, lá deixavam;
 E já despóis que toda se escondeo,
 Nao vimos mais em fim que mar, e ceo."

—V. 3.

Of Equatorial Africa he says: "We passed the limit where stops the sun when leading his chariot to the North and where lie the races to which the son of Clymene (Phaeton) refuses the colour of the day."

Here are a few short pictures of morning and sunset. "As soon as the dappled dawn (to take the word of Milton) spreads over the quiet skies her lovely hair and opens the purple gate to bright Hyperion, rising from his sleep."

Now the music of the Poet himself:

"Mas assi como a Aurora marchetada
 Os fermosos cabellos espalhou
 No ceo sereno, abrindo a roxa entrada
 Ao claro Hyperionio, que acordou . . ."

I, 59.

Again: "Already the loving star scintillates in the horizon before the bright sun, and visits, messenger of the day, the earth and the wide sea with a gladdening brow."

"Mas já a amorosa estrella scintillava
 Diante do sol claro no horizonte,
 Messageira do dia, e visitava
 A terra, e o largo mar, com leda fronte."

—VI, 85.

Hear how it sounds like Italian :

"Ma già l'amorosa stella scintillava
Dinanzi al chiaro sol nell 'orizzonte,
Messagera del dì, e visitava
La terra e il largo mar con lieta fronte."

The verses give the same fresh, luminous, awakening impression as the words of Shakespeare on the lips of Romeo :

" . . . jocund day
"Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops."

Once more, the morning: "The slow shadows were already dissolving over the flowers of earth in fresh dew." Hear the inimitable beauty of it in Portuguese :

"Iam-se as sombras lentas desfazendo
Sobre as flores da terra em frio orvalho."
—II, 92.

Now the sunset. The sun is approaching his "longed-for, tardy, goal, and the God of Night opens for him the gate of his secret ocean home."

"E da casa marítima secreta
Lhe estava o deus nocturno a porta abrindo."
—II, 1.

And elsewhere again the evening twilight: "Now the light began to grow uncertain, as the mighty lamp was hiding beneath the horizon, and, full of light, was carrying the day to the antipodes."

"Mas já a luz se mostrava duvidosa,
Porque a alampada grande se escondia
Debaixo do horizonte, e luminosa
Levava aos antípodas o dia."

VIII, 44.

The third great impression is that of Empire building and of sea-power. Camoens has done for Portugal what was never done by her poets for England, but, by doing it for his own Nation, he has celebrated the whole colonial expansion of Europe. The *LUSIADS* is the poem of colonization, of far away enterprise, and therefore the poem of the building up of the New World. It expresses the whole law of immigration, the greatest of all events of modern History, in a single verse: "Any land is country for the strong."

"Que toda terra é patria para o forte."

Edgar Quinet in his *Génie des Religions* says that the *LUSIADS* is the poem of the alliance of the West with the East. . . . "You find in it everywhere, he writes, a soul as deep as the ocean and like the ocean it joins the two opposite shores." No doubt there is in the *LUSIADS* a powerful evocation of the newly discovered East, but the western spirit remains free in the Poet from all its influence, does not suffer its penetration, nor surrenders, like Alexander, to its charm. The East appears to him only as a field of enterprise and action. The two shores that the *LUSIADS* seem destined to link are not so much those of Europe and Asia, as those of Europe and America, because, as has so often been said, the *LUSIADS* is the poem of commerce and industry, the poem of the Modern Age, and in all this the part of America is and shall be much larger than that of Asia.

The fourth great impression is creative power, imagination. Nothing shows it better than the manner in which Camoens converts a dull log-book into grand poetry. The transformation begins with the dream of King Dom Manoel, to whom appear the spirits of the

Ganges and the Indus, to tell that Portugal will rule in India. Follows the departure of the fleet from Lisbon, a picture in which Camoens personifies the Past in the figure of an old man, *with a wisdom all made of experiences*, condemning the whole course of faraway conquest, by which "the old Kingdom would be dispeopled, weakened and transplanted afar." IV, 101.

"Por quem se despovoe o reino antigo,
Se enfraqueça e se vá deitando a longe . . ."
—IV, 101.

After the condemnation of the national policy pursued by the Portuguese kings, Camoens renews in a curse against all human daring the bland reproaches of Horace in his Ode to the ship carrying Virgil to Athens. . . .

"....., qui fragilem truci
Commisit pelago ratem
Primus,"

"Cursed be the first who in the world put a sail to a dry log upon the waves."

"Oh maldito o primeiro, que no mundo
Nas ondas vela poz em secco lenho!"
—IV, 112.

Then comes Adamastor, than which there is not a greater creation in modern Literature, a living Myth. Hear how the Giant tells his own story, when he sees that his prophecies will not make the Portuguese turn their ships round. There is not a word that does not belong to the Poet in what is going to be read to you. The Greek orators stopped to have the decrees of

Athens read by the herald. I will ask one of you to be the herald of Camoens.

"I am that hidden and great Cape which you named of Tempests, never known to Ptolemy, Pomponius, Strabo, Pliny, nor to any of those who passed. . . . Here I end all the African coast on this my never seen promontory, which extends towards the Antarctic Pole, whom your presumption now so much offends.

"I was one of the fiercest sons of Earth, like Enceladus, Ægeus and the Centiman; my name was Adamastor and I took part in the war against him that hurls Vulcan's bolts: not that I piled hill upon hill, but, conquering the waves of the ocean, I was Captain of the sea, where wandered the fleet of Neptune which I was pursuing.

"Love for the noble spouse of Peleus led me to undertake such great enterprise. I scorned all the goddesses of Heaven only to love the princess of the waters. One day I saw her with the daughters of Nereus come out all bare on the shore and at once my will was so enslaved that even now I do not feel anything that I long so much for.

"As it would be impossible to obtain her through the ugly hugeness of my face, I determined to take her by arms and I told Doris of my intent. The Goddess in dread speaks to her for me, but she with an honest and candid laughter replied: 'What love of a Nymph would be enough to bear that of a giant?

"Still to free the ocean from so much war, I will seek a way to excuse my honour and to avoid the harm.' The messenger brought me that answer, and, as lover's blindness is great, I would not see the snare and my bosom was filled with abundances of raptures and hopes.

"Fooled, renouncing already war, one night promised by Doris, I saw at a distance the beautiful form of the white Thetis, alone unrobed. Like mad, I run from afar, opening my arms to her who was the life of this body, and I begin to kiss her lovely eyes, her cheeks and her hair.

"Oh, from humiliation, I hardly can say more. Thinking I had in my arms the loved one, I found myself embracing a rugged moun-

tain of the harshest wood. Standing, face to face, before a stone which I clasped for the angelic figure, I remained not a man, but deaf and motionless, and close to a rock, another rock.

"Oh, Nymph the most fair of the ocean, since my presence does not please thee, what would it cost to keep me in this deceit, were it mountain, cloud, dream or nought? Raging and well nigh insane from the grief and the shame suffered there, I left in search of another world where none would scoff at my tears and my despair.

"Meanwhile my brethren were vanquished and in extremest misery placed, some, for the greater surety of the Gods, lying beneath various superposed mountains, and, as against Heaven hands are of no avail, I began, while weeping my misfortune, to receive from an enemy Fate the penalty for my audacity.

"My flesh is converted into solid earth, my bones into rocks, and these limbs, which thou seest, and this form were extended along these long waters; at last, my enormous stature was changed by the Gods into this remote Cape and, to double my woes, Thetis is surrounding me with her waves."

—V, 50-59.

This is the mighty Spirit of the Cape, which will live as long as Table Mountain shall appear before men's eyes. "Already Phlegon and Pyrois were drawing, with the other pair, the radiant chariot, when began to show itself the high headland into which the great giant was converted." V, 61.

The last of the large frescoes worthy of the Renaissance is the Isle of Love, which Venus puts and moves in the ocean before "the second Argonauts, who have just discovered the New World," to give them all the delights of Nature and of Love. The Isle of Love is a poem by itself. Is it an allegory, as the Poet says?... Or did he only say it to pass the Cerberus of the Inquisition? The sensualism of the composition is as naif as that of Eden before nakedness

was felt. The beauty of the scenery equals that of any other landscape in poetry. The whole tapestry might serve as model for many paintings. The *Chase of Diana* of the Domenichino seems copied from it.

This brings me to one more great impression of the LUSIADS: The Renaissance. The LUSIADS is the only one Poem that reflects and resumes it, the only one written under its inspiration. There is in Lisbon a most interesting manuscript of 1549, from a Portuguese painter, Francisco de Hollanda, telling his conversations with Michelangelo in Rome. I only know a fragment translated into French. Camoens never left Portugal, except to fight in Africa and to fight in India. He had, however, the intuition of the Renaissance as perfect as if he had been, like Francisco de Hollanda, in the company of Michelangelo, Baccio Bandinelli, Perino del Vaga, Sebastiano del Piombo, and, last but not least, Vittoria Colonna, marchesa di Pescara. That shows that a new spirit is an all-encircling wave. Perino, for instance, will have painted the ships of Æneas and the struggle of the Giants with Jupiter, in the Villa Doria in Genoa, under the same dictation as Camoens painted Vasco da Gama's ships and the fate of Adamastor. Camoens' work has exactly the character of the later work of Raphael. Between his Venus, his Galatea, his Cupid and those of Raphael, I at least could not distinguish. I never went to the Farnesina that I had not the impression that Camoens and Raphael were twin painters. I keep in my LUSIADS as its best illustration the pictures of the Farnesina.

The Mythology of the LUSIADS seems an evolution of the old Mythology such as would perhaps have taken place if Paganism had lasted ten centuries more by

the side of Christianity. It is living. As a Poetics, it has kept all its plastic force. It is not a *pastiche*; it is a perfect survival. Camoens is much more of a Polytheist in invention, I do not say in criticism, as he never explained his creations, than Goethe. It was once said that the Greeks and the Germans alone have drunk at the cup of the Muses. There is nothing in German literature to compare with the myths of the *LUSIADS*. The Muses are nowhere so visible as here. The reign of Neptune, for example, had never such splendour; never were held in the Ocean so brilliant courts; never did the sea swarm with so many beautiful Nymphs. The *LUSIADS* is truly the poem of Venus. It is a censer, in which are burnt to her all the perfumes of the newly discovered East.

A sixth great impression of the Poem is the direction of life to the highest pursuits. In the *LUSIADS* Camoens has satisfied the four great passions of his soul; in fact, his whole soul: Country, Love, Poetry, and Action. He could not have given them all such an immensity of expansion and such an intensity of glow in any other field. It is that which makes the superiority of the *LUSIADS* to any purely literary Epic as a guide of life. The Poet lived his inspiration; his work comprises both poetry and action of the highest order.

The spirit of action appears in every stanza, with the spirit of loftiness, that raises it. On every human sphere is marked the lines that divide the highest and the lowest regions of action. He will say, for instance of love: "Love of a lower kind enfeebles the strong;" or "Love badly placed is the more exacting." While he traces in admirable verses in Canto V and in Canto X the loyalty and devotion of the Portuguese people to

its monarch, he says bluntly that the Kingdom will not obey nor suffer a king that will not excel all others.

"A rei nao obedece, nem consente,
Que nao for mais que todos excellente."

—II, 93.

Because "a weak king makes weak a strong race."

"Que um fraco rei faz fraca a forte gente."

—III, 138.

Of Dom John I he says that "to him strength grew from his heart as to the Hebrew Samson from his hair."

"Joanne a quem do peito o esforço crece,
Como a Samsão hébreu da guedelha."

—IV, 12.

He sets the standard of courage on a higher basis than the equality of strength, when he says that "it is not like the Lusitans to fear a greater power because of being the smaller."

"Por que não é das forças Lusitanas
Temer poder maior por mais pequeno."

—III, 99.

He promises never to sing any ambitious man, who wishes to rise to high charges only to exercise his vices in a wider sphere"; nor him "who to court the erring vulgar shall surpass Proteus in change of figure"; nor him "who does not find it just and good respect to pay the sweat of the servile people," and "who taxes with a mean and rapacious hand the toils he does not share." (VII, 84-86.) He condemns thus the malign and cowardly abuse of power: "He who in-

flicts a vile and unjust harm by using the power and the force in which he is invested, does not win; the true victory is to have on one's side right naked and entire."

"Quem faz injúria vil e sem razão,
Com forças e poder, em que está posto,
Não vence; que a victoria verdadeira,
E' saber ter justiça nua e inteira."

—X, 58.

He denounces Christianity for abandoning the tomb of Christ and upholds the freedom of Greeks, Thracians, Armenians and Georgians with eloquence greater than that of Gladstone: "O wretched Christians, are you perchance the teeth sown by Cadmus, which give to each other a cruel death, having all come from the same womb?"

O'miseros Christãos! pela ventura
Sois os dentes de Cadmo desparzidos,
Que uns aos outros se dão a morte dura,
Sendo todos de um ventre produzidos?

—VII, 9.

"If you go and conquer alien lands moved by greed of large seignories, do you not see that the Pactolus and the Hermus both roll auriferous sands? In Lydia and Assyria are worked threads of gold; Africa hides in her bosom brilliant veins. May so much wealth move you, since the holy house does not move." VII, 11.

He pays the highest tribute to the liberal poet-King Dom Diniz, for the foundation of the University of Coimbra:

"It was he who first caused the high craft of Minerva to be practised in Coimbra and made the Muses desert the Helicon to tread the rich verdure of the Mondego; all that could be expected

in Athens is given here by proud Apollo; here he distributes the wreaths of baccharis and evergreen laurel twined with gold."—III, 97.

But the gospel of the true American spirit, of what has been named "strenuous life", are the verses in which he exalts the feat of the Portuguese discoverers on their arrival in India. Here you will recognize your own ideal, when read by one of you:

"It is through these dreadful dangers, these grievous labours and fears, that those who are friends of fame win the immortal honours, the highest degrees; not by leaning on the ancient tree of their noble ancestry, nor by lying on golden beds amidst soft sables from Moscovia.

"Not with novel and exquisite viands, not with easy and idle walks; not with the varied and infinite delights that effeminate the generous breasts; not with the never conquered appetites, which Fortune keeps always as her charms not to allow anyone to turn his steps into some earnest heroic deed.

"But by searching with his strong arm honours which he may rightly call his own; by watching and dressing in arrays of steel; enduring tempests and wild waves; vanquishing icy colds in the heart of South and regions bare of shelter; swallowing the tainted food spiced with arduous suffering.

"And by forcing the face that would grow pale to look assured, gay and unbroken, to the red hot balls that, whistling, carry away his comrade's leg or arm: thus the heart contracts a noble callousness, spurner of honors and wealth forged by fortune and not by valor hard and righteous.

"Thus brightens the understanding which long experiences have set at rest and he can see, as from a high sphere, the base intricacy of human dealing. Wherever be in force the covenant of right, unmindful of private affections, this one shall rise, as is due, to illustrious command against his own will, not by soliciting."

I wish to point out one great impression more.

Highest poetical genius may not necessarily require adversity as its atmosphere; but the relation of adversity with it is certainly a striking one in the three cases of Dante, Camoens and Milton. In prosperity Camoens would not have gone to India and without the voyage to India it is impossible to imagine the *LUSIADS*. He might have produced a poem as beautiful; he could not have produced one so stirring. He might perhaps have been even more the poet of the Renaissance, if he had seen Italy instead; but he would not have been the national poet he is. That is the last impression I alluded to: that you see throughout his work the figure of the Poet under the fate intent on the creation of the *LUSIADS*.

He begins full of enthusiasm, certain of the laurel that will crown him. He says to the boy-king Dom Sebastiam, speaking of his verses: "Thou shalt see love of Country, not moved by a vile prize, as it is no vile prize to be renowned by the acclaim of my paternal nest."

Veréis amor da pátria, não movido
De prêmio vil, mas alto, e quasi eterno:
Que não é prêmio vil ser conhecido
Per um pregão do ninho meu paterno.

—I, 10.

And the honeymoon of intellectual creation, of the wedding of genius with his work, lasts nearly throughout the composition of the whole Poem. Here and there you detect signs of dejection at the indifference and ungratefulness he experiences. At the end of the fifth Canto he will say that only his own love for his country is forcing the Muses to give renown in the lyre to his hero, as Calliope is not herself a friend of his, nor would

the Tagids leave their golden webs to sing him. He remembers sometimes and resents, but he feels he is fully avenged when he once has pilloried in his Epic the vices and abuses of India. He fights bravely. Only when his task is nearly over he shows weariness. At the beginning of the last Canto, after saying he is losing the taste for writing, he breaks in this lonely vein, that makes one remember Milton on his blindness.

"Years are declining and shortly I shall have stepped from summer into autumn; adversity chills my genius, and no longer I rejoice or pride in it; sorrows are taking me to the river of dark oblivion and eternal sleep; still, Queen of the Muses, grant me to fulfill the vow I made to my country."—X, 9.

Vão os annos decendo, e já do estio
 Ha pouco que passar ate o outomno:
 A fortuna me faz o engenho frio,
 Do qual já não me jacto, nem me abono.
 Os desgostos me vão levando ao rio
 Do negro esquecimento e eterno sono:
 Mas, tu me dá que cumpra, ó gran rainha
 Das Musas, c'o que quero á nação minha!

Or, as Mickle puts it:

"Yet let me live to crown the song
 That boasts my nation's proud renown."

The Poem, however, was now complete, he could see in his manuscript the dazzling wealth he had accumulated during those long years of patient suffering; he had given wings to the prose of Castanheda and Joam de Barros, so that the glory of Portugal would no longer be buried to the world in the Portuguese language, and when he embarks to Lisbon, after an exile of sixteen years in Asia, the hope of a national recognition smiles again to him, while no longer firing his heart as

in his youth. What a disappointment! The nation was already on her death-bed. She could not feel the message of immortality he was bringing—she had no sympathy with those who tried to lead her into heroic action or immortal fame, and he pronounces his “No more! No more!”

“No more, Muse, no more. The lyre lies out of tune and my voice has grown harsh, not from singing, but from finding that I have sung to a deaf and insensible people. This nation can not give the favors that most fire the genius, as she is immersed in the taste of covetousness and in the rudeness of an austere, worn out and vile sadness.”—X, 45.

Still see what an incorrigible automaton the poet, the creator, is of the inspiration, which never cares for his own sorrow. The very last words of the *LUSIADS* shall be again an appeal to the young and mad king, Dom Sebastiam, then of age, to go to Africa and rout the Moors, so that the Poet’s “already renowned and content Muse” could sing again and the world might see in him “an Alexander who need not envy the fortune of Achilles.”—X, 156.

The Muse was content, but the instrument was broken. This is one of the great impressions of the *LUSIADS*: the tragedy of persecuted genius at work.

Gentlemen, I only wished to make you more curious of the *LUSIADS* and I hope I have succeeded. I did not come here to submit to criticism what an immemorial prescription raises above it. There is a reason why genius should only be recognized by the masses, and that is, because it draws from them the inspiration that it returns to our mind in poetry, as the cloud gives back to the earth in fertilizing rain the water it drew from the ocean. Here I am remembering the observation

made by Camoens, that the water-spout returns the seawater without any of its salt. (V, 22). Genius also keeps for itself all the bitterness of the inspiration it imbibes in life's ocean.

We do not fear for Camoens. As soon as the LUSIADS appeared, Torquato Tasso made himself the paronymph *del colto e buon Luigi*, who has ever since ranked by the side of him "who drank so deeply of the Aonian fount"

Esse que bebeu tanto da agua Aonia (V, 87).

and of the other, quoting again from him, "who illumines the whole Ausonia and whose divine voice lulls to sleep his native Mincio and swells the Tiber with pride."

Ess' outro que esclarece toda Ausonia,
A cuja voz altisona e divina,
Ouvindo, o patrio Mincio se adormece,
Mas o Tibre c'o som se ensobervece.

—V, 87.

He achieved, like them, through poetry, an aim beyond the reach of the statesman and of the king, that of imparting immortal life to the spirit of his race. Do not compare the LUSIADS with La Divina Commedia or with Paradise Lost, or with Orlando Furioso and Gerusalemme Liberata; compare it with the Iliad and the Æneid. Dante gives you the spirit of the Middle Ages; Ariosto and Tasso try to inspire themselves in an epoch that was no longer theirs; Milton takes his subject beyond the range of human imagination, where it, at least, could not soar with our senses; Camoens alone among the poets remained on the same ground that Homer and Virgil occupied, and he shows that that

ground is eternal, as the one on which was raised the Parthenon.

Camoens, no doubt, borrowed from Virgil, as when he makes Venus the protectress of the Portuguese and of their ships, but whatever he borrows he renovates, as a great painter treating the same subject that inspired a former one. No human mind was ever great enough to owe all to itself alone. Virgil took from Homer more than Camoens from him. The law of genius is that of Molière: "*Je prends mon bien où je le trouve;*" only he must make it truly his own by a different and superior title, as Shakespeare so often did.

Who could say which is more beautiful: the Greek temple or the Gothic Cathedral? It is like asking which is the finer sight: the sea in calm or the sea in tempest. We may love above all the figure of Prometheus; we are bound to do so, as we are his intellectual children, but if we consider mind, not heart, power, not beneficence, we cannot place the Prometheus of Æschylus above the Satan of Milton. No one knows which is the greater of the two: Newton, who found the law of the Universe, or Raphael, who received the wand of beauty. Intellectual measures must be taken in depth and width, as well as in height, and you have to look for them in design, in colour, in music, and not only in words.

Gentlemen, I did not intend, on coming here, to indulge in any invidious comparisons. They nowhere appear so odious as in the enjoyment of Nature and of Poetry. I hope you do not believe in them. The true law of criticism is found in the Genesis: "And God saw that it was good." All is equally good that is really created. You cannot graduate perfection. I did not mean when I took for my subject *the place of Camoens in literature* to put him in line with the other great

poets and take their respective heights. I only wanted to show that he is one of those peaks, which cannot be measured, of the immortal chain of Creators.

C.D.U

92

N 113 p

92(NABUCCO) (042)