

# ✕ BASSEIN. ✕

By "WIHORA."

*Photos. by W. B. Maunder, Bombay.*



A visitor to Bombay should fail to see Bassein, once called the Corte do Norte, or Chief City of the North, and to-day a witness to the ruined power of Imperial Spain and Portugal. Deserted cities and broken temples are not uncommon in India, but the spectacle of Christian edifices, cathedrals, churches, colleges, and great mansions standing in utter ruin is indeed a rare sight.

In something like an hour, the train from Bombay lands you at Bassein station on the B.B. and C.I. Railway, from whence a good road of four miles terminates in the old fortress and cathedral city. It is impossible to plan a more convenient excursion. Trains run at frequent intervals, and at either end crowds of conveyances and importunate coolies solicit engagement. Should a whole day afford insufficient time to explore the ruins, any number of subsequent trips may be taken with a minimum of fatigue and expense.

The history of Spain and Portugal is interesting to every one. The imagination is fired by the names of Columbus, Cortez, Vasco da Gamma, the Armada, Mexico, and the Inquisition. In this city we have the last resting place of Dons, Fidalgos and grandees without number, whilst it was closely connected for two hundred years with some of the proudest and most illustrious names of European history.

What reader of Kingsley can walk these deserted streets and ruined squares without calling to mind Oxenham, Granville, Hawkins, Drake, and many another hero of early days? It is easy to picture some Devonshire sea-king standing here and calling on us to witness the hand of the Lord. For what purpose were hard blows struck? to what end were curses shouted? and where flow the torrents of blood shed in those days? What requital greater than this consummation of desolation could the bitterest enemy look for?

The glory has departed, but the glamour still lingers. When the morning sun lights up the great red towers and battled gateways that rise above the green distant sea, one feels that the old city is still at the zenith of her pristine greatness. The horses neigh, the captains shout, and the battle rages afar over land and sea. Count Arnaldos sings that wonderful song; large galleons, laden with rich merchandise, ride at anchor in the harbour, or lie moored at the busy wharves; Spanish sailors with bearded lips sing at their work; fair ladies of old Madrid, Saville and Granada still people the mansions; while dark, stately priests pass by convent and monastery. Those blood-stained years have gone with all their long tale of greed and intolerance. Only the ruined shell remains with a purpose that no one can mistake.

The fortress is an irregular decagon in shape, and at each of the