

THE  
COLONIAL MAGAZINE

AND

COMMERCIAL-MARITIME JOURNAL.

---

AUGUST—DECEMBER, 1842.

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VOL. I.

“ FAR AS THE BREEZE CAN BEAR THE BILLOW'S FOAM,  
SURVEY OUR EMPIRE, AND BEHOLD OUR HOME.”

FISHER, SON, & CO.  
NEWGATE-STREET, LONDON; POST-OFFICE PLACE, LIVERPOOL;  
AND RUE ST. HONORÉ, PARIS.

## P R E F A C E.

IF Colonial interests awoke a lively curiosity in the United Kingdom when the first pages of this volume were written, how much more intense that feeling when the last were published! A species of commercial combination has since been formed amongst the continental powers—France has shown less liberality towards our manufactures than before; and the monetary derangements of the United States of America, in conjunction with its rigorous new Tariff, have alarmed the people of England as to the degree of reliance to be placed on Foreign Commerce in future. This reflection must necessarily direct the vigilant attention of the legislature, as well as of the mercantile community, to the present and prospective state of our Colonial Possessions.

The population of these insular kingdoms having become too great for their limited surface, Emigration would certainly appear to present itself amongst the first and most immediate remedies for this *plethora*. This question has been very fully discussed in the pages of this volume, and it is our intention to continue its agitation until truth, utility, or certainty shall have been elicited. The progress of our armies in India and in China—historically, authentically—disengaged from all feeling of faction or political prejudice—has been regularly and minutely detailed; the state of trade, population, finance, in all our infant colonies, has received the utmost, in fact, the most elaborate care; and, it is probable, that no contemporary periodical includes so many original articles, on subjects of such vital importance to the prosperity of our Manufactures and our Commerce. Before, however, a steady, profitable, and extensive trade can be lastingly established between the Colonies and the Parent State, much remains to be done, either immediately by the co-operation of the aristocracy of rank and of wealth; or mediately, by legislative interference. To the most

## PREFACE.

pressing of these requisites it shall be still our constant aim to call, and to direct, public attention. We have already made provision for essays, articles, treatises, and papers upon the most engrossing subjects connected with colonial legislature, and amelioration, for our succeeding numbers, and have enlisted in our cause the best talent now resident in the colonies to promote these objects.

We must not conclude the labours of a year without an expression of gratitude, which we here cheerfully render, accompanied by a solicitation, that our friends and subscribers will not relax in their patriotic—their philanthropic efforts, to send us original and authentic information relating to climate, natural history, statistics—the working of colonial enactments, as regards either their uses or abuses—favours which shall be uniformly treated in the way most conducive to public good, and least subversive of private interests or happiness.

LONDON, December, 1842.

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# FISHER'S COLONIAL MAGAZINE.

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## MANILLA.

(BY A CORRESPONDENT.)

A SKETCH of Manilla, containing the leading particulars of its modern history, may prove an acquisition, since it will correct some of the inaccuracies of the Gazetteers, and add newer information to what is already known of this Island. From the advantageous position of Manilla, with respect to India, China, and America,\* it ought to be a place of the first commercial importance, but under its Spanish government, trade has never been encouraged, or rather until recently was altogether suppressed. The prevalence of earthquakes, tornadoes, typhoons, and whirlwinds, may be viewed as another obstruction to the spirit of commerce in the Philippines. The inhabitants of Manilla are continually in dread that, by volcanic agency, the work of years may be destroyed in a moment. To this feeling we are inclined to ascribe the indisposition of the Spanish settlers to improve the natural advantages of a rich and beautiful country. Only a small part, comparatively, of the island is now under cultivation by human labour, although it is stated to be capable of producing three or four times more than it is made to do. But, apart from other circumstances, it is notorious that the Spanish colonists on the Philippine Islands, are, with few exceptions, a degenerate race, miserably poor, prejudiced, priest-ridden, ignorant, and lazy. They seem to consider, says a writer, who now resides at Singapore, exertion of any kind, *except in a dance*, as quite inconsistent with a proper mode of passing through life. As an instance that may be adduced of the ignorance which prevails, we may observe, that cock-fighting is at once the business and the pleasure of the colonists, high and low; indeed, this false taste is carried to such an excess, that every

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\* The eastern end of the Island of Luzon (Manilla) is little more than 400 miles from the coast of the Chinese province of Fokien, and scarcely half that distance from the southern promontory of Formosa. This proximity has excited, at different times, the jealousy of both nations, and will still more alarm the Chinese now that their European neighbours display increased energy and activity.



man seems to have his fighting-cock ready in his hand. The poor Indians are as superstitious as they well can be, and completely blinded by the friars and padres, who are spread all over the Islands. In each province there is an alcalde who is chief magistrate. A writer in the *Singapore Chronicle*, of a recent date, to whom we are indebted for some of the newest facts of this article, has the following remarks on the mode of administering justice in Manilla.

“As already mentioned, the Spaniards have no idea of working, and prefer living in a state of poverty in the city to going to the country, where a few years’ residence generally enables them to retire wealthy; so that when any one is appointed alcalde, he is very poor, and of course has no credit when he arrives at his post; but his influence as alcalde, joined to that of the friars, (which is generally united,) who have now accumulated large sums of money in their convents, and exercise a most exclusive authority over the natives, enables these two parties to carry on the whole export trade of the province, by a system of oppression and corruption, which, while it fills their individual pockets, is effecting the ruin of the country. For instance, suppose that on one hand there are the alcalde, whose only object is to collect some thousand dollars, (and it is notorious that these gentlemen are very far from being particular how they get it,) and the friars and padres, who are far from respectable, and who seem to retain a complete control over the natives, and to collect large funds to strengthen their influence with the government—I don’t think they spend much on their living—and, on the other hand, the natives, who are passionately fond of all sorts of gambling, (which is illegal,) and careless of money but for that purpose. To enjoy that pleasure, they must make friends with the authorities, either by bribes, or giving a good bargain when he sells his produce, which, as foreigners are not allowed to trade in the interior, and Spaniards are above such a thing, he must sell to the alcalde and padres. The natives accordingly sell the produce before it is collected, and receive the money in advance, (supplied I fancy at first by the convent,) so that it matters not to them whether the crop is good or bad, as respects either quantity or quality; all they care for they have already received in money to gamble away, and in plenary indulgences and forgiveness of all crimes, so that none can be surprised at the slow increase of trade while so destructive a system is allowed, and no doubt you will wonder why it is allowed. I think it is unnecessary to go into details to shew the weakness of the government; suffice it to say, that so dependent it is on the padres’ influence over the natives, in order to keep them under, that not a few flagrant crimes on the part of these gentlemen are passed over in silence, no doubt from fear that, so soon as the natives are released from that bondage in which they are now held by the Catholic priests, Spanish rule would soon be at an end. No foreign clergyman is allowed to reside even in Manilla, and I think it not unlikely that the means of education have been purposely withheld from the colony at large, in order to prevent the native acquiring any knowledge of worldly affairs. Foreigners are denied even a burying ground, and it is only by sufferance that those who die are half buried—half sunk in water—at the edge of a paddyfield. This is no doubt to inspire the Indians with a contempt for us *so called* heretics.

“ It is quite melancholy to see the younger part of the population growing up, without *the means* of getting even a common education, there being no schools worthy of the name ; and to find that some of the first ladies of the place cannot, with even common accuracy, write their own language. Added to this is a strong prejudice against all foreigners, which seems to have been taught them by the Catholic priests, who are the most influential class of people, so that you may easily imagine how little inducement there is to cultivate Spanish acquaintances, after acquiring sufficient knowledge of the language, to be only disgusted by the littleness of their conversation.”

It may be necessary before proceeding further, to give the geographical situation of Manilla, and say something of its institutes, topography, soil, climate, &c. It is the capital, then, of all the Spanish settlements in the Philippines, and a city on the Island of Luzon, one of the Philippines. Manilla stands on the east coast of an extensive bay, which presents a singularly rich and picturesque scene. The country on the right hand slopes gradually down to the water's edge, from a considerable height, and exhibits the appearance of being in a rich state of cultivation, but a nearer approach discovers it to be entirely the work of nature. On the left, the high mountains stand more abrupt and detached, but are equally covered with verdure to the summits. To the redundant moisture of the climate the great luxuriance of the country is attributed.\* Manilla lies in the south-east corner, in a low situation on the left bank of the river Passig, which discharges the waters of a lake thirty miles inland, and is here about as wide as the Thames at Vauxhall, separating the city from the suburbs. The river is navigable for vessels, not exceeding 250 tons, for a short distance inland, but its rapid current has formed a bar at its entrance, over which there are only twelve feet of water at spring-tides. Over the river there is a neat stone bridge of ten arches, and at the north-west angle is Santiago, a clumsy old-fashioned fortification. Vessels ride about a mile and a half from the shore in the roads ; but during the south-west monsoon, from the middle of April to November, they are forced to take shelter in Covite, a small but secure port, three leagues south. The length of the city within the walls, according to Hamilton, is 1,300 Spanish yards, the width 774, and circumference 4,166 yards. The land-face has a double wet ditch, and towards the sea there is a breastwork thrown up to prevent a landing. Within the walls are the public and religious buildings, of which the most remarkable is the cathedral. The houses are large, and, on account of the frequent earthquakes, solidly built, more especially on the ground-floors.

Manilla contains many handsome houses, and in its suburbs, which are extensive, there are numerous superior specimens of domestic architecture. The population of the city and suburbs, has been estimated (in 1840,) at 200,000 persons, of all denominations.

The Spanish revenue is principally realized in Luzon, and arises chiefly from the monopoly of tobacco, which several years back yielded 500,000

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\* Notwithstanding the tropical latitude of the Philippines, the heat is not oppressive ; and if the atmosphere were less moist, the climate would be unexceptionable. The rainy season is from May to December. From December to May there is perpetual verdure.