

crenellated wall protecting its top still stands to its full height; a cannon lies embedded in the floor.

From this high bastion, which lower down may contain casemates no longer accessible, a large elevated terrace is reached adjoining the south curtain. From the remains of less massively built walls which cover it, it may be concluded that it bore quarters intended for officers, &c. On the northern (inner) edge of the terrace there is a very deep pit, semicircular on one side and lined throughout with hard reddish plaster, which probably was also a cistern. Local tradition takes it for a dungeon. Rather high up in one transverse wall still standing there are two *œil-de-bœuf* openings evidently meant for ventilation. Their elegant framing with neatly cut slabs of stone suggests care having been bestowed upon the construction of these quarters. From the eastern end of the terrace, close to where it overlooks the approach to the main gate, stairs lead down to a very large and high hall, now without a roof. From it the great central court of the castle is reached through a well-preserved double gate, with arches of carved slabs of red sandstone. High up two large windows splayed inwards give light to this hall. Could it have served as the chapel of the castle?

Even in its ruined state this Portuguese fortress bears impressive testimony to the firm resolve and thoughtful care with which the first European masters of Eastern seas had planted their foothold on this small island at the gate of the Persian Gulf. Considering the trying conditions of the climate and the utter barrenness of the ground outside, life could have offered little attraction to those who kept watch and guard over this base of maritime power. In the moist heat prevailing here even at this the least oppressive season of the year I could not think without dismay of the sufferings which life amidst these walls must have entailed for those who defended the castle before it fell in April 1622, after a two months' siege, to the combined attack of Persian land forces and English ships.<sup>4</sup> Deficiency of water and food supplies, together with increasing sickness, helped to bring about surrender after a valiant defence.

Looking down from the height of the castle keep on the small village of fishermen and the dumps of red oxide and salt which now form the only commodities of trade on the island, it was difficult to realize how this barren rock, devoid of local resources and even of adequate water, could have held for centuries an emporium proverbial for its wealth throughout the East and West. An area about three-quarters of a mile in length and less than half a mile across,

<sup>4</sup> A detailed account of this siege is to be found in the Portuguese narrative of Ruy Freyre de Andrada, recently translated and edited by C. R. Boxer, and published in 1930 by Messrs. G.

Routledge & Sons in the 'Broadway Travellers' Series, under the title of *Commentaries of Ruy Freyre de Andrada*.