



THE STRAITS SETTLEMENTS AND BRITISH MALAYA.

BY SIR J. FREDERICK DICKSON, K.C.M.G.

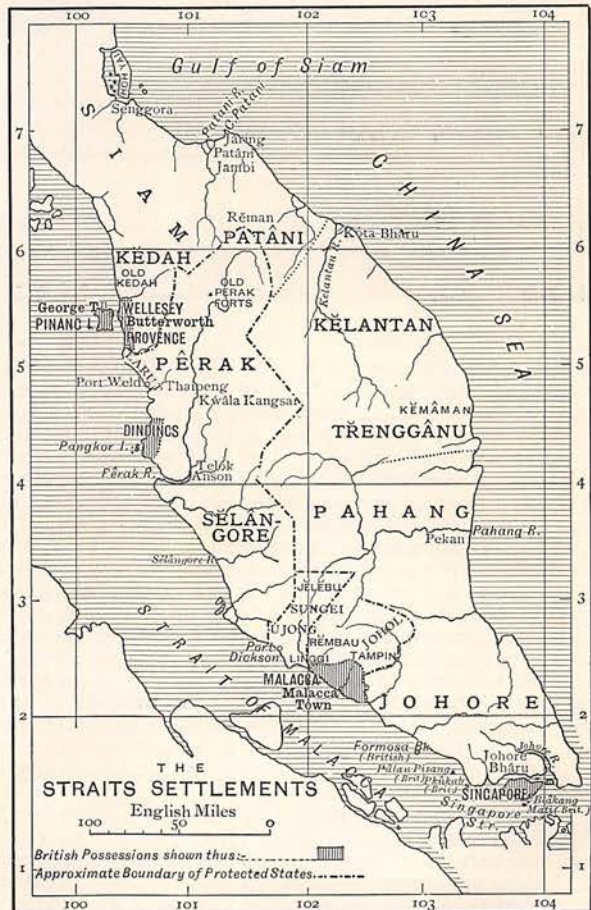
With Illustrations by R. T. PRITCHETT.



HE "Straits Settlements" is a political rather than a geographical expression. It is the name given to the Crown Colony formed in 1867 of detached portions of the mainland of the Malay Peninsula and certain islands (the two most remote from each other being 350 miles apart) which previously were administered as a separate sub-government of the Madras Presidency.

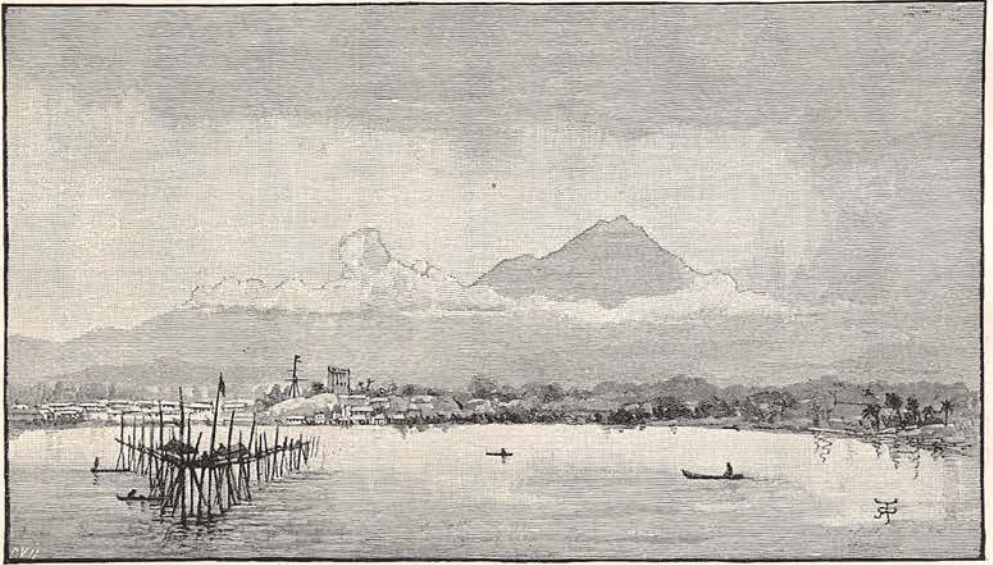
Under the last letters patent, dated June 17, 1885, the Straits Settlements comprise:—the Island of Singapore, the Town and Province of Malacca, the Territory and Islands of the Dindings, the Island of Penang, Province Wellesley, and their dependencies. Together they are estimated to be 1,458 square miles in extent, with a population of about 500,000, and a revenue of 3,847,653 dollars. Outside the limits of the colony proper, British influence is being extended year by year over the Malay Peninsula and the large island of Borneo in a way which it is the purpose of this paper to explain.

The colony takes its name from the Straits of Malacca, in the neighbourhood of which its *disjecta membra* are situated. Of these, following the order given in the letters patent, Singapore comes first. It is an island twenty-seven miles long by fourteen wide, containing with its adjacent islets 223 square miles, separated from the Malay peninsula by a narrow strait three quarters of a mile in width. It practically has no history prior to 1819 and no vestige of any historical remains,



for the only record of its old-time connection with Buddhist history, an interesting engraved stone, probably of the fourth century A.D., was broken up in 1843. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it was a great emporium of commerce; De Barros mentions it as the resort of navigation from India, Siam, China, and the "many thousand islands which lie towards the East." It was founded by Sri Iskandershah in 1160, taken by a Javanese rajah in 1252, and abandoned in the fourteenth century. It is not mentioned by Marco Pólo, nor by François Pyrard early in the seventeenth century. It remained independent and scarcely inhabited until the genius of Sir Stamford Raffles selected it to be the centre of British influence in the Malayan countries. By a treaty with certain Malay princes he acquired it in 1819, for reasons which he explained in the following extracts from an interesting letter to Colonel Addenbrooke, dated Singapore, June 10, 1819:—

"You will probably have to consult the map in order to ascertain from what part of the world this letter is dated. Refer to the extremity of the Malay Peninsula, where you will observe several



MALACCA.

small islands forming the Straits of Singapore. On one of these are the ruins of the ancient capital of 'Singapura,' or 'City of the Lion,' as it is called by the Malays. Here I have just planted the British flag, and a more commanding and promising station for the protection and improvement of all our interests in this quarter cannot well be conceived. Since my return to this country my public attention has been chiefly directed to the proceedings of the Hollanders, who, not satisfied with receiving from us the fertile and important islands of Java and the Moluccas, have attempted to exercise a supremacy over the whole of Borneo and Sumatra, and to exclude our nation from all intercourse with the other states of the archipelago. They have been very particular in the means, and they seem to have considered the degradation of the English character as necessary to their own establishment. You may easily conceive how much annoyance this has given to me, and prepared as I was to remain a quiet spectator of all their actions, I have not found it possible to continue entirely neutral. While they confined their proceedings to the countries in which European authority was established, we had no right to interfere; these we had by treaty agreed to transfer to them, and they were of course at liberty to act in them as they thought proper without reference to our interests; but they no sooner found themselves possessed of these than they conceived the idea of driving us from the archipelago altogether, and when I made my reappearance in these seas they had actually hardly left us an inch of ground to stand upon. Even our right to the spot on which I write this, though yesterday a wilderness and without inhabitant, is disputed; and in return for our unparalleled generosity, we are left almost without a resting place in the archipelago.

"But it is not our interests alone that have suffered by this unexpected return; those of humanity and civilization suffer more deeply. To comprehend the question justly, you must consider that it has always been an object of the first importance to our Indian interests to preserve a free and uninterrupted commerce with these islands as well on account of this commerce itself, as the safety of our more extensive commerce with China, which lies beyond them; and that for

the last century, owing to the defects and radical weakness of the Dutch, we have been able to effect this without serious molestation from them. The consequence of this constant and friendly intercourse has been the establishment of numerous independent states throughout the archipelago.

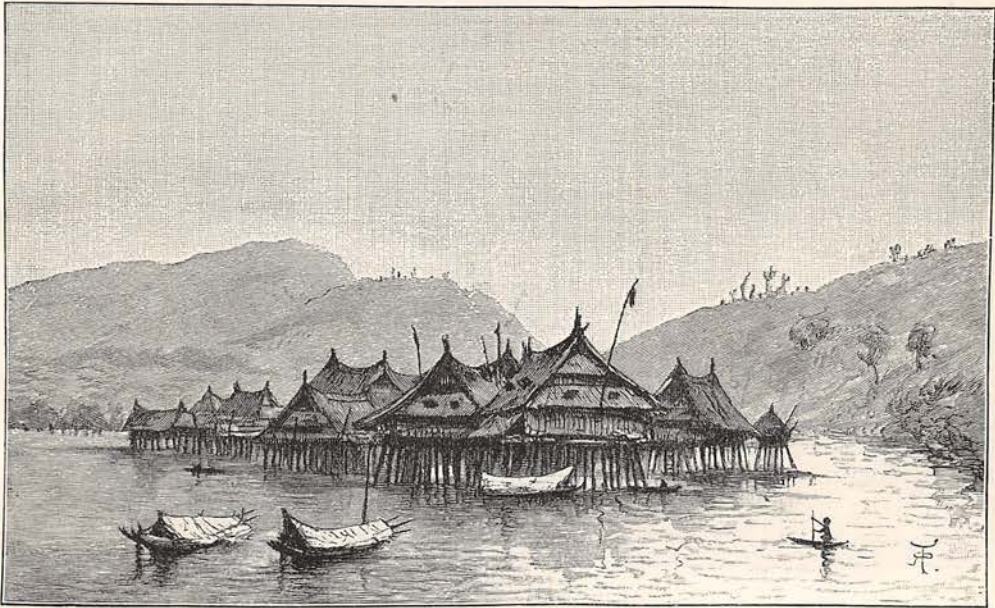
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“It was clear that the object of the Dutch was not only to command for themselves all the trade of the Eastern Islands, but to possess the power in the event of future war of preventing our regular intercourse with China. By possessing the only passes to this empire, namely, the Straits of Sunda and Malacca, they had it in their power at all times to impede that trade; and of their disposition to exert this power, even in time of peace, there was no doubt.

“It was therefore determined that we should lose no time in securing, if practicable, the command of one of these Straits; and the Straits of Malacca, on account of their proximity to our other settlements, appeared the most eligible.

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“I shall say nothing of the importance which I attach to the permanence of the position I have taken up at Singapore; it is a child of my own. But for my Malay studies I should hardly



MALAY VILLAGE, JOHORE.

have known that such a place existed, not only the European but the Indian world also was ignorant of it. It is impossible to conceive a place combining more advantages, it is within a week's sail of China, still closer to Siam, Cochin-China, &c., in the very heart of the archipelago, or as the Malays call it, it is 'the navel of the Malay countries.'”

Singapore was at first under Bencoolen in Sumatra, of which Sir Stamford Raffles was then the Lieut.-Governor; in 1823 it was transferred to the government of Bengal: and in 1826 together with Malacca was incorporated with Penang, which became the head of a presidency: later in 1829 these three settlements were reduced to the position of a colony of Madras, and in 1837 the seat of government was transferred to Singapore. From the first it made good progress, and attracted the attention of the Chinese, who are now the principal landowners and merchants of Singapore, and the most enterprising and influential of the inhabitants of the colony taken as a whole. Raffles, writing again in June, 1819, said, “My new colony thrives most rapidly. We have not been established four months and it has received an accession of population exceeding 5,000—principally Chinese—and their number is daily increasing.” They now number nearly 87,000 out of 140,000.

The Island of Singapore is studded with numerous low hills and intervening swamps. In many cases the hills have been levelled and the swamps filled in. The port, one of the greatest centres of trade in the East, consists of the Old and the New Harbour. The former is a roadstead five miles in length, free from rocks, and

safe in all weathers. The latter is formed by the channel about two and three-quarter miles in length which lies between the town of Singapore on the north and two small islands on the south. It is sheltered and safe, has deep water up to the shore on the Singapore side, and is lined for about a mile and a half with wharves, where steamers of all sizes can coal and discharge and take in cargo. The town is in $1^{\circ} 16'$ north latitude and $103^{\circ} 53'$ east longitude: the climate is therefore one of perpetual summer—hot and damp, and though not unhealthy is very depressing to those Europeans who are compelled to reside there without change for many months at a time.

Malacca is situated about 110 miles to the north-west of Singapore on the mainland of the Malay Peninsula. The town lies between $2^{\circ} 10'$ north latitude and $102^{\circ} 14'$ east longitude, and with a strip of land forty-two miles long and twenty-five miles broad forms the town and territory of Malacca, in area 659 square miles. The settlement was founded soon after the fall of Singapura, by the Javanese rajah who had taken it. It rose rapidly, and became the seat of a considerable Malay monarchy till its capture



THE FISH MARKET, SINGAPORE.

by the Portuguese under d'Albuquerque in 1511: they held it till 1641, when they were driven out by the Dutch, who had in vain laid siege to it in 1606. Of this siege, and of the great naval fight which followed, a graphic account is given in the *Voyage of François Pysard*, who says of Malacca, that "the town is the richest and busiest of all the Indies, after Goa and Ormus, owing to the great cargoes from China, Japan, the Moluccas, and all the Sunda which are landed there."¹ Malacca was taken from the Dutch by the English in 1795, and was restored to them at the peace of 1818, in accordance with the Treaty of Vienna. Finally it was ceded to the English by the Treaty with Holland of March 17, 1824, in exchange for the East India Company's settlement of Bencoolen and other places on the west coast of Sumatra. By this treaty it was also arranged that Holland should not interfere for the future with the affairs of, or have any settlement on, the Malay Peninsula; while the British agreed to leave Sumatra entirely to the Dutch, saving only Acheen, the independence of which was guaranteed until the later treaty of Nov. 2, 1871. Malacca thus has a continuous history, and in this is unlike Singapore, which it replaced as the centre of eastern trade. The harbour of Malacca is now much silted up, and its roadstead is only visited by small local traders. It ceased about the close of the seventeenth century to be one of the great centres for the commerce of the East, but it remained the collecting centre for the trade of the Malayan Peninsula and Sumatra till the assumption of British authority in Penang in 1786, which became the chief place of trade in these seas until it was supplanted by Singapore. Malacca has therefore to rely solely on its

¹ See the edition of this voyage translated by Albert Gray. Vol. ii., p. 155. Hakluyt Society. 1888.

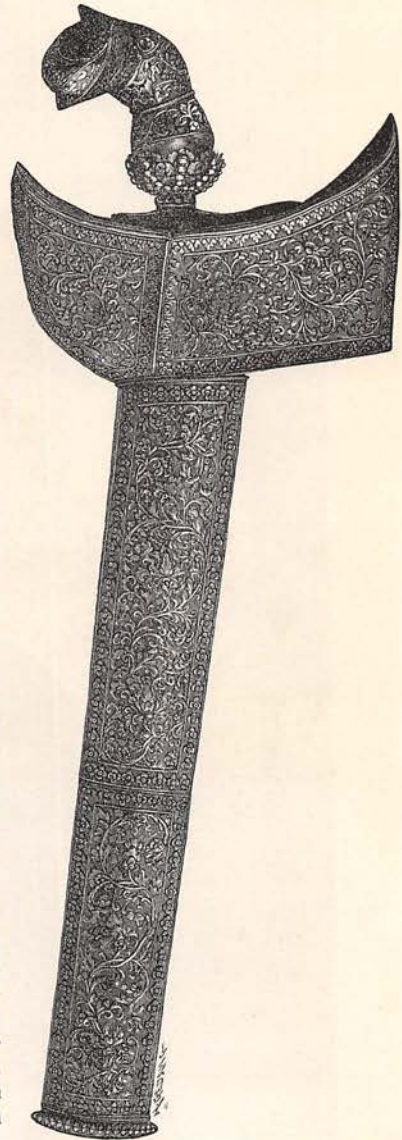
agricultural resources, and on the development of the protected Native States adjoining it, and on improved administration in accordance with the policy of the late governor, Sir Frederick Weld, G.C.M.G., who confined the powers of the municipality within the limits of the town, releasing from its control the country districts, which are now placed in charge of members of the Civil Service, whose duty it is to make roads, encourage cultivation, and in every way develop the resources of the country, and thus remedy the evils from which Malacca suffered until it came under British rule.

The territory and islands of the Dindings include the Islands of Pangkor, a strip of territory on the mainland, half the small island at the mouth of the Perak river, and nine small islands to the southward; the area is estimated at 200 square miles, and their population at about 2,500, of which half is Chinese and half Malay. The Islands of Pangkor lie across the mouth of the Dinding estuary, which is the best natural harbour on the western side of the peninsula, and as the resources of Perak are developed must become the chief outlet for the produce of that large and important state. The Dindings were taken over in 1874, as a necessary measure for the suppression of piracy, and in pursuance of Sir Frederick Weld's policy for the development of the country districts, have been placed in charge of a member of the Civil Service of the colony, while provision has been made for regular steam communication with Singapore and Penang, from which places it is distant about 270 and 80 miles respectively. The government station at Pangkor is in $4^{\circ} 15'$ north latitude and $100^{\circ} 35'$ east longitude; owing to the unhealthiness of the island the Government station is now being moved to a site on the mainland at the mouth of the estuary.

The Dindings supply Penang with timber suitable for building purposes, and when irrigation canals have been formed will have valuable land for rice cultivation.

The island of Penang, or more correctly Pinang, is named after the beautiful areca palm which grows there in abundance, and yields the betel-nut of commerce. The chief town is Georgetown, in $5^{\circ} 24'$ north latitude and $100^{\circ} 21'$ east longitude, about 240 miles from Malacca and 350 miles from Singapore. Penang is about fifteen miles long by nine broad, with an area of 106 square miles and a population of upwards of 90,000. It lies off the west coast of the Malay Peninsula at the northern extremity of the Straits of Malacca. On the opposite shore of the mainland is Province Wellesley, a strip of territory 45 miles along the coast, with an area of 270 square miles and a population of 97,000.

Penang was ceded to the East India Company by the Rajah of Kedah in 1786. By a treaty with Kedah in 1800, confirmed by the treaty with Siam of May 6, 1869, a strip of the mainland thirty-five miles in length was acquired, and by the Treaty of Pangkor of 1874 another ten miles of coast was added to it. This territory, secured for the suppression of piracy, is now a well-governed and peaceful district, while its rich alluvial soil has attracted European planters, who have opened up sugar and tapioca estates, cultivated by labourers imported from India. Penang is recovering much of its commercial prosperity, it has benefited



MALAY KRIS, PRESERVED IN THE COLONIAL OFFICE. THE SCABBARD AND HANDLE ARE OF GOLD.

greatly by the extensive exports of tin from Perak, Selangor, and Junk Ceylon (a corruption of the name Ujong Salang), and by the tobacco plantations of the east coast of Sumatra. The dependencies of these settlements include numerous small islands and islets.

The colony is administered by a Governor, an Executive Council of nine officials including the Governor, and a Legislative Council, consisting of the Executive



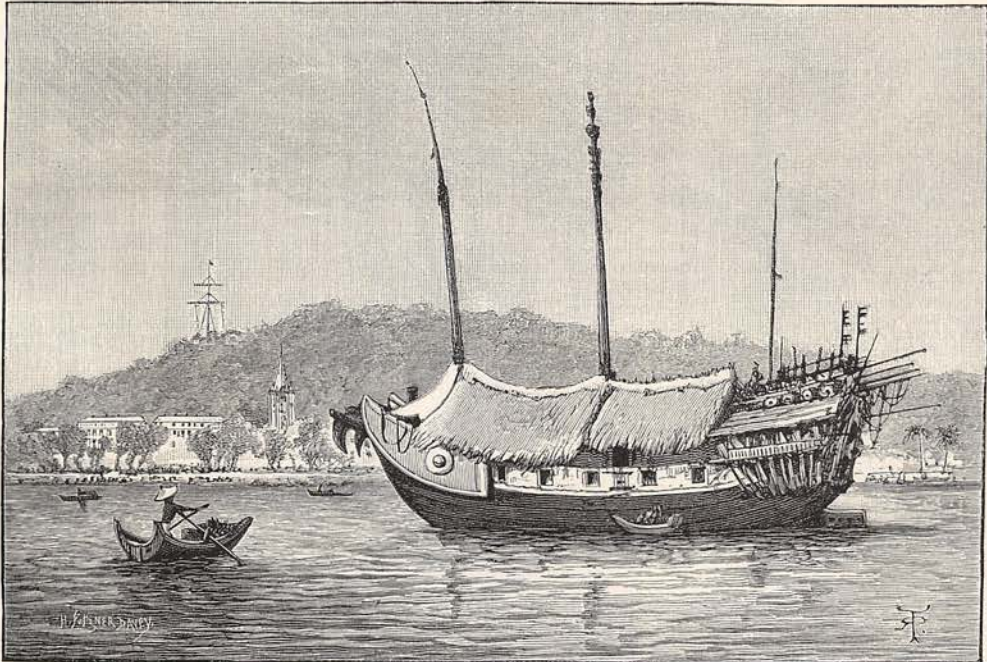
PORTUGUESE GATEWAY, MALACCA.

Council with the addition of seven nominated unofficial members. The unofficial members are generally merchants or lawyers of Singapore or Penang, two of them representing the Chamber of Commerce of Singapore and Penang respectively: there is one Chinese member and one European planter from Province Wellesley. Like Ceylon it has had, since 1867, a Civil Service of trained officials who are required to learn the languages of the different races which compose the population.

The following figures, though short of the total population, show the proportions of the principal races in each Settlement :—

	Europeans.	Malays.	Chinese.	Natives of India.
Singapore	2,769	22,155	86,766	12,058
Penang	612	21,772	45,135	15,730
Province Wellesley.	76	58,723	21,637	10,616
Malacca	40	67,513	19,741	11,891

The Chinese slightly outnumber the Malays and, with the natives of India form an immigrant settlement far larger than that of the original natives. This is a point of much importance, as the great "European ignorance" in regard to the Chinese adds considerably to the difficulties of government. Any blunder which would alienate the Chinese and make them hesitate to come freely to the colony would be most



SINGAPORE FROM THE EAST.

disastrous and seriously check its progress, depending as it does in a great measure on Chinese energy and perseverance. It would also largely reduce the revenue, to which they mainly contribute. The peculiar composition of the population is a matter not to be neglected by those who have to determine the liability of the colony towards the defence of its coaling station maintained in the interests of the British trade with China and the far East, and for the use of our Navy; in short for Imperial rather than for Colonial interests. This coaling station has grown up since the transfer of the colony from the Indian to the Colonial Department in 1867. At the end of 1869 the Suez Canal was opened and has revolutionized the whole of the Eastern trade, which, no longer carried by sailing vessels round the Cape, now passes by steamer through the Suez Canal; and at the safe and convenient port of Singapore, lying in the direct route to the eastward for all vessels from Suez, is daily to be seen a long line of steamers of all nations, those under the British flag predominating, lying along the wharves in the New Harbour while the roadstead is crowded with sailing vessels from all parts of the Malay Archipelago, which resort to this free port. In 1887, the shipping entered and cleared at all the ports of the colony was of the total tonnage of 8,948,600, of which 5,689,648 was British; while the imports from the United Kingdom were \$32,210,548, from the Colonies, \$61,607,580, from elsewhere, \$58,609,856,

total, \$142,322,920 ; exports to the United Kingdom, \$26,758,508 ; to the Colonies, \$35,090,917 ; to elsewhere, \$59,491,786 ; total, \$121,341,211.

So far we have seen how the Colony of the Straits Settlements has been formed and what position it holds as a trading centre : it remains to consider the not less important position it occupies as a centre of British political influence in the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago. This influence took its rise in 1600 when the East India Company was granted a charter, at first for fifteen years, chiefly for the purpose of



THE FALLS AT PENANG.

trading to Malay ; it led to many conflicts with the Dutch, only brought to an end by the Treaty of 1824, which confines the region of influence for Great Britain to the Malay Peninsula, the islands north of Singapore and the northern portion of Borneo, while that of Holland is limited to Sumatra and Java, the islands to the south of Singapore and the southern portion of Borneo.

From 1827 to 1867 the Indian Government does not appear to have given much attention to Malay affairs ; but after the transfer of the colony to the Colonial Office, internal dissensions and disturbances on the peninsula and piracy on the coast of Perak were found to injuriously affect the Settlement of Penang and the coasting trade in the Straits of Malacca. As regards Perak, these difficulties were, in 1874, ended by the acquisition¹ of territory under the Treaty of Pangkor, giving us the command of the sea-coast of Perak. This enabled us effectually to restrain piracy and lay the foundation for the system of "Residents," under which we are gradually obtaining by peaceful means the absolute control of the whole Malay Peninsula south of

Burmah and Siam. At the outset this policy was disastrous, as it resulted in the murder in 1875, of the first British Resident sent to Perak,² and necessitated sending troops from India and China to obtain redress and secure order. The murderers were arrested and punished ; and Sir Hugh Low, an administrator of great ability and power was appointed Resident. In the middle of 1874 Selangor was placed under a Resident, Sungei Ujong soon after being brought under a similar rule ; the Sri Menanti Confederation followed in 1886 and Pahang in 1888. These states are under the supervision of the Governor of the Straits Settlements, who is represented in each state by the Resident, with a staff under him of European officers corresponding to the Civil Service of the colony. They are not subject to the control of the Legislative Committee of the colony, but there is a strong bond of union in community of interests and in the assistance given them by the colony in the form of loans, when they first came under European

¹ By Sir Andrew Clarke.

² Mr. J. W. Birch.

guidance and control. There is the further tie that the protected native States and the Colony are under one Governor. In theory the Resident only "advises" the Sultan or native ruler of the state, but practically (subject to the direction of the Governor) he is more absolute in his authority than the Governor of a Crown Colony. He and the European officers under him collect all the revenues and control the treasuries—the native ruler having a fixed civil list—and, without his sanction, not a penny can be spent, while the force of armed police, composed of fine warlike Sikhs, is entirely in his hands. The system thus introduced by Sir Andrew Clarke, and nurtured and developed by Sir Frederick Weld, differs materially from annexation. The native ruler remains at the head of his state, retaining all the dignity of the position, and presiding at the meetings of the state Councils at which the Resident has a seat, nominally as an adviser, though in reality this Council is the adviser of the Resident. At its



A NATIVE BOAT.

meetings all regulations, laws, and estimates are passed, all trials for murder are reviewed, and all petitions and complaints from the people are investigated. Perfect order is maintained in the states thus governed, forming a striking contrast to those which remain under the purely native system of government. Capitalists, chiefly Chinese, have established in them mining operations on a large scale, and they are being rapidly developed and provided with good roads and railways. As the State of Johor is under our protection, though not administered by British officers, our influence extends on both sides of the peninsula as far as the latitude of the Dindings. To complete the dominance over the whole of the south of the peninsula we have yet to obtain control of Kedah in the north, and of Patani Kelantan and Trengganu on the east coast, as will be seen on reference to the accompanying map. To consolidate our domination it is necessary that we should carry out a connected system of roads and railways. Some progress in this direction has already been made, by the formation of a short line of railway in Perak from Port Weld to Thaipeng on the metre gauge; and of another in Selangor from Klang to Kwala Lumpur, twenty-two miles in length; while in Sungei Ujong there is a line of twenty-one miles in length in course of construction from Port Dickson on the coast to Seremban, the chief town of the state. This railway is of importance as showing the new departure in Malay practice of making a harbour on the sea-coast and thus abandoning the creeks and estuaries which were

the resort of the old Malay pirates ; also now that we have acquired control of Pahang it is desirable to connect it with the west coast (since its ports on the east coast are closed during the north-east monsoon from October to March), and the best way to effect this is by a continuation of the railway from Seremban through Kwala Pilah to Pahang. The new port has been surveyed and reported upon by Commander Gifford, R.N., and though only opened in 1889 is already well known at "Lloyd's," and in the language of the underwriters is considered "a good risk."

In Borneo British influence now extends over the whole of the northern portion. Sarawak was ceded by the Sultan of Brunei to Sir James Brooke, well known as Rajah Brooke, in 1842, and is now under British protection. In 1846 Labuan was ceded to Great Britain ; it is a Crown Colony, and since 1869 has been self-supporting.¹ The whole of North Borneo, about 30,000 square miles in extent, with a coast line of 900 miles, is held by the British North Borneo Company under Royal Charter of 1881, and all that remains of the ancient kingdom of Borneo, lying between Sarawak and British North Borneo, has recently been taken under the protection of Great Britain for the security of the Sultan of Brunei. In Borneo as in the Malay Peninsula British authority has stamped out piracy, and peaceful progress is being made ; and the trade of the Straits Settlements takes an important place in the trade returns of the Empire. The total trade of the Empire being taken at one thousand millions sterling, the United Kingdom contributes 61·4 per cent. of this total, and India 16 per cent., leaving less than 23 per cent. to be divided among the rest of the Empire. New South Wales and Canada contribute 3·8 per cent. each ; the Straits Settlements 3·4 ; Victoria 3·2 ; New Zealand 1·3 ; Queensland and the Cape 1·1 each ; South Australia 1 per cent. ; and all the other British possessions less than 1 per cent. each. The total contribution of the Colonies to the trade of the United Kingdom is a little over 26 per cent., and of this while India contributes 9 per cent., Australasia 8, British North America 2·9, the Cape and Natal 1·3, the Straits Settlements contribute 1·1, the West Indies 1, and all the rest less than 1 per cent. each.²

The Straits Settlements are of small value to the Empire for their own products and resources ; their importance is in their position, which gives them political control of the Malay Peninsula, and makes them the collecting and distributing centre of the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago ; Singapore being one of the most important coaling ports and naval stations in the Empire. Singapore and Penang have but small area and resources, and the wealth of Malacca is not great ; but the Native States have great mineral wealth, and also a great agricultural future awaiting capital for their full development ; at present the only outlet for their trade is through the ports of Singapore and Penang ; and though nominally independent they are in reality so completely under British influence and authority that a review of the position of the colony would be imperfect which did not regard the Native States as part of it.

Here and in Borneo the representatives of British authority are brought in contact with the Malay races, and we may claim in our dealings with them to have attained no small measure of success and to have followed, though at a humble distance, in the footsteps of the great administrators of the Indian Empire.³ Here England is brought into close contact with Holland, and though in Colonial Government our methods are very different, each goes its own way in close and friendly rivalry. Here the surplus population of our subjects in Southern India find a congenial climate and a suitable field for their labour. Here the Chinese in ever-increasing numbers voluntarily place themselves under our rule, make riches for themselves, contribute largely to the progress and prosperity of British Malaya ; and already, in the second and third generations, are not merely friendly and contented aliens, but are true and loyal subjects of the Queen.

¹ It is now proposed to place this colony under the administration of the British North Borneo Company.

² See Sir Rawson Rawson's recent volume on the trade returns of the Empire.

³ See an interesting summary of the position of the Straits Settlements in the *Hist. Geog. of the British Colonies*, Vol. I. pp. 124-6, by C. P. Lucas.