Labuan Story

Memoirs of a Small Island

By

Maxwell Hall

sometime in the Chartered Company's Service

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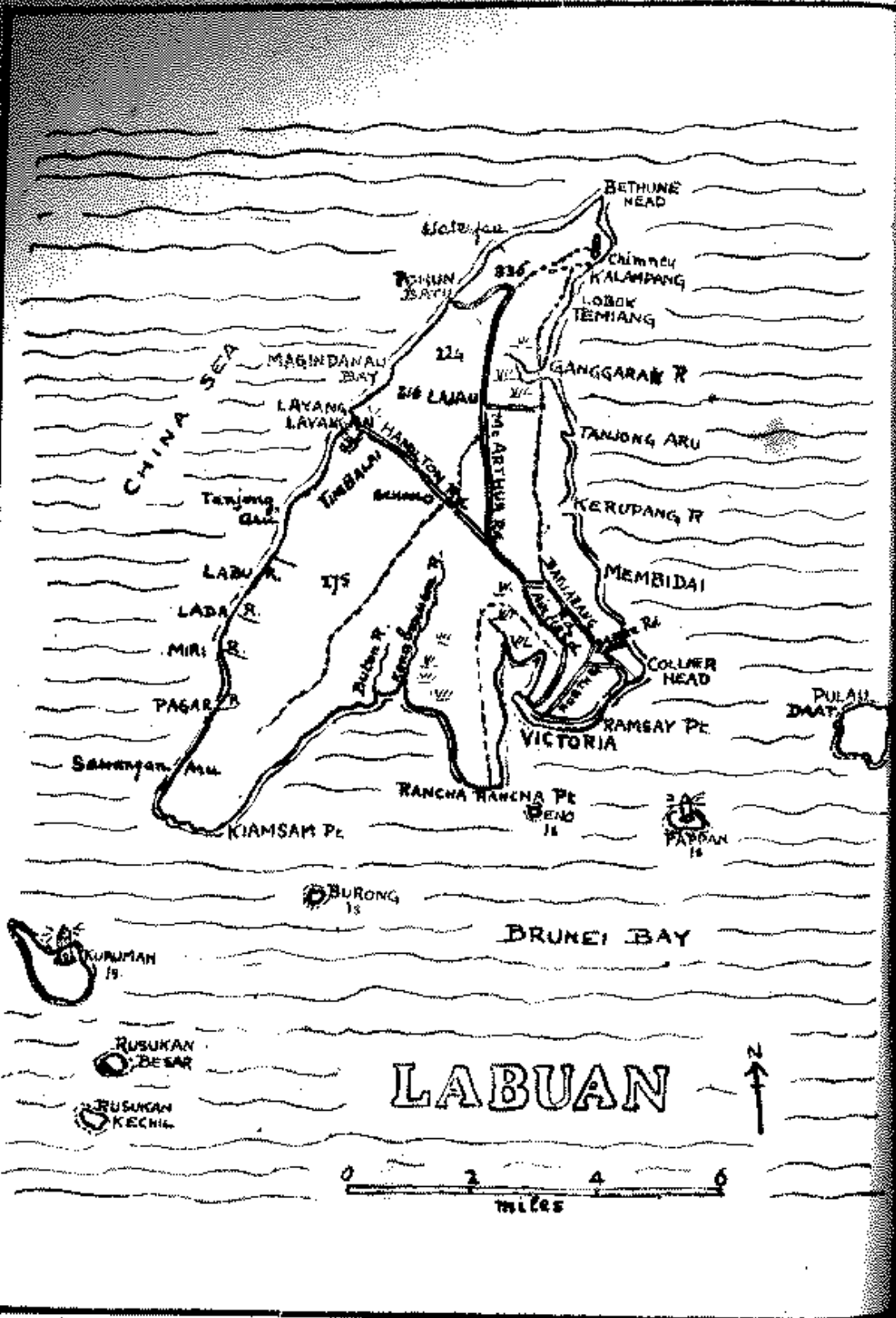
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LABUAN STORY

Memoirs of a

Small Island

near the Coast of

North Borneo

"Is this 'ere island going round or am I?"

Blackwood's Magazine

CHAPTER 1

THEN AND NOW

THE story of Labuan in those forgotten years before Queen Victoria received the island as a gift from the unwilling hands of Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin II of Brunei is unknown except for a few incidents in the days of the East India Company. But after the Queen's government had taken possession, much interest was aroused.

That was one hundred and ten years ago, and I have visited the island now and then for fifty years of that time.

I first set foot on its palm-lined beach in 1905, landing from a German Lloyd steamer. The island was noted for its ponies and its post office. Ponies raced on the plain by the sea shore. The post office sold rare stamps and sorted the London mail for a dozen destinations in Borneo.

I sought the Chartered Company's district officer.

"No!" said M. W. H. Beech, "there are no headhunters here!" Passengers stepping out of aircraft on Labuan airfield still ask that same question. "Go where you like and see yourself," Beech added hurling a heavy mail bag on to a counter twenty feet away and laying his hand on another, while every jack man of his staff ducked their heads. Men were gluttons for work in those days. They had to sort the London mail in a short two or three hours.

trade. The name Labuan is derived from the Malay word *laboh-an*, meaning anchorage. The association of Brunei and Labuan is a close one, and the splendid and safe anchorage has always been attractive to Malays, as it became later to the British.

The right pronunciation of the names gives equal weight to each of the three syllables: La-bu-an, though often an accent is wrongly thrown on the second syllable.

A map of the world will show Labuan as a mere dot on the north west coast of Borneo.

Labuan is 35 square miles in area. It is distant 40 miles by sea and river from the town of Brunei. Temperatures range from 70 to 92 degrees Fahrenheit. The climate is largely influenced by the prevailing monsoon. The

A house in Labuan today

average rainfall is about 130 inches a year. The census in 1951 recorded a population of 8,784.

This is made up of some 5,000 Kedayans and Bruneis, 3,000 Chinese and 750 others.

* * *

The earliest map of Labuan is that prepared by Captain Sir Edward Belcher of H.M.S. *Dido*. It is dated 1884 and it can be seen in volume 2 of "The Expedition to Borneo of H.M.S. *Dido* for the Suppression of Piracy" by Captain Hon. Henry Keppell which was published in 1847.

That map contains only a few names: North Tongue (now Bethune Head), North Bluff, Collier Point, and Victoria Bay on the island, and the islets of Daat, Pappan, Eno, Burong, Rusukan Besar and Rusukan Kechil around it, with soundings to the south and east. Some of the names were spelled differently in those days.

It is a pity that more sailors' names have not been commemorated by naming capes, headlands and bays after them. Collier Head is named after Admiral Sir Francis Collier, whose headquarters were at Singapore, (where Collyer Quay is named after someone else) and Bethune Head is named after Captain C. Drinkwater Bethune, C.B., R.N. of H.M.S. *Driver* who represented the British Government in some of its dealings with Sultan Omar Ali.

Bethune is pronounced Beeton—Beeton Head.

* * *

Brunei Bay was called Thunder and Lightning Bay by naval men and it well deserves that name because scarcely a day passes without some heavy squall sweeping down from the mountains while lightning flashes and thunder rolls and re-echoes amongst the mountains.

The island's scenery presents nothing bold or grand and is a relief from the massive mountains, the steaming swamps and the turbid rivers of the mainland of Borneo. Frank Marryat, Midship man, writing in 1843 about the appearance of the Bornean coast from the deck of H.M.S. *Samarang* (a ship whose name will often appear in these pages), complained that he had never been on a coast which on inspection through a telescope promised so much and on landing caused such disappointment. Disillusion need not hurt a visitor landing on a sandy beech at Labuan.

Walking almost anywhere inland from a beach he will see white pigeon orchids spraying like a waterfall from a tree trunk, with ferns, palms and tangled creepers about him. The estuaries of the streams are fringed with mangrove and nipah swamp, and are best avoided.

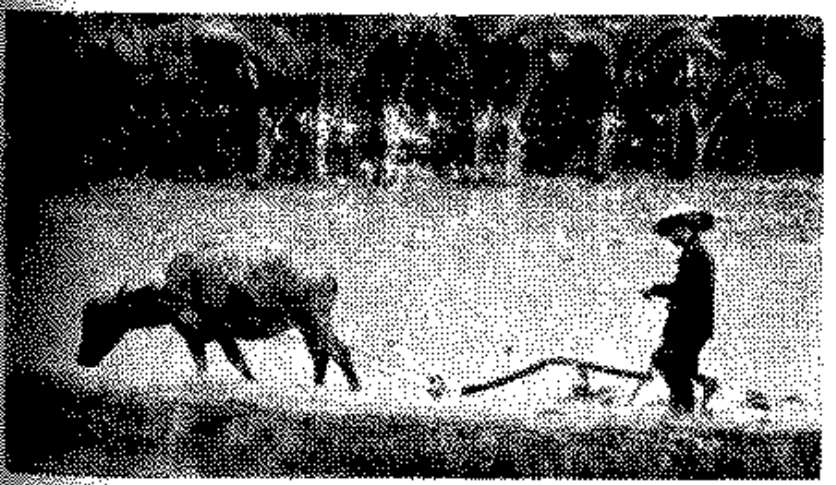
No people lived permanently on the island when the Sultan of Brunei ceded it to Queen Victoria a hundred and ten years ago. A few fisher-folk had built huts along the beach and stayed a few days at a time to repair their nets and fill their jars with fresh water.

The coconut and fruit groves belong for the most part to Kedayans, a Muslim people, who

have come from the mainland. In the early days some of these comers were slaves who fled from their Brunei masters to seek British protection. Others were free men seeking land of their own. The Kedayans are industrious folk and good farmers, and are engaged in rice planting, copra production fruit growing and rubber tapping. Many also are fishermen.

* * *

The people on the mainland opposite are very much mixed. None knows whence the tribes on the mainland of Borneo originally came. There are no curly-haired negrito like the Semang of Malaya, no fossil man and no prehistoric man. Mr. Banks. for twenty years Curator of the museum at Kuching, thought that these tribes now so scattered and altered by foreign and religious influence, were the original occupants of Borneo. Whether Dayak, or Kadayan, they are



Ploughing ricefield with buffalo

held in every house, and neighbours invite each other to share the good things. They have other festivals. A burial holds the attention of a village for a day or two, and a wedding will stop all work for a fortnight.

The Malays build wooden houses standing on stilts over the water or in shade of trees. They till their fields without undue exertion. They prize leisure above wealth. They prefer family life at home to pioneering for gain in foreign places. They wait patiently for a new life in the arms of Allah, and meanwhile their island home has the sad beauty of a neglected garden.

Everybody, who can, lives on a floor elevated a few feet from the ground, for there is too much damp to live level with the earth.

These people belong to another world, a world little understood by ourselves, but amongst them are a few of the most honest, and most gentle people in any station of life. Their thoughts may be few, but so much the better.

* * *

Labuan is as healthy as any other place in this part of the world. How bad its climate was in the past may be read in the pages which follow, but there is little to fear now. Perhaps the only man to complain was the coffin maker who watched his trade slacken because the Colonial Surgeon raised the expectation of life so high.

"*Tolong-lah*! Help! help!" said the old coffin maker to the Doctor as he handed him the

customary present of a bottle of Scotch whisky wrapped loosely in a sheet of Chinese newspaper.

"Are you sick?" ask the Doctor.

"No, I am well", replied the coffin maker. "But *Tolong*! *Tolong-lah*!" The Doctor knew what he meant and laughed at the old villain, whose coffins could get no tenants.

Doctors of the Rockefeller Foundation have visited the island and organised treatments. The people have benefited much from its generosity particularly since the 1925.

* * *

Wherever Chinese settle there are always plenty of babies to be seen, and Labuan is no exception. A mother can be seen carrying a long pole on her shoulders in the time-honoured way with baskets slung at either end. In one basket are vegetables for sale and in the other basket, to make the balance even, are one or more babies. Their wide open eyes watch the scene by the roadside in panoramic style as the basket circles on its string.

Welfare societies look after family life in the villages and organise bazaars and lotteries to raise funds. Tickets in the lotteries are eagerly taken up. One lady in charge was lecturing to expectant mothers about a lottery and paused for an instant to recover her breath. An expectant mother, already mother of three, took advantage of the moment.

"I have no money to buy a ticket in the lottery," she wailed, wiping her eyes with the fringe of her cartwheel hat.

"Take this baby, and give me a ticket!" she cried, "I'll sell her for a dollar!".

That family ties can be loosened by lotteries came as a new thought to the lecturer.

X X X X

One of the first sign posts the visitor will see is a board pointing to McArthur Road. It is named after M S. H. McArthur, a Malayan civil servant, who was appointed Resident of Labuan in 1906 and earned the distinction also of being the first British Resident at the court of Brunei.

General Douglas MacArthur, the famous American General who commanded the allied armies of the Pacific in the war against Japan visited Labuan. He had used Labuan as a stepping stone to the conquest of the rest of Borneo, and he landed two days after the Australian Ninth Division get ashore. He saw the road signpost standing solitary in a scene of devastation.

"MacArthur Road"! He exclaimed. "Quick work! Thanks a lot!"

The roads in Labuan were re-named when the Australian army landed in 1945 to dispossess the Japanese. Each road was given a name in alphabetical order. In old days before the war, the British phonetic alphabet had a splendid and traditional ring about it. 'A' for apples, 'B' for Beer, and 'L' for London They were all typically British allusions, but after weeks of deliberations during the war a committee, sitting

it is said in Washington, decreed a new alphabet. In future 'A' should stand for Able, 'B' should stand for Baker, and 'L' was to stand, of all things, for love. So amongst the new names of roads in Labuan were Able, Baker, Charlie, Fox, Love, and of course McArthur. A few of these names still survive, but most of the old names have been repainted on the road posts.

* * *

A beach in Labuan is not a place where a man sits puffing a pipe and looking seawards. At low tide every man, woman and child searches for the little bivalve shells an inch or two below the sands. The little animal inside makes good bait.

At high tide the fisherman ashore throws his *jambat* while those in boats drag their nets. At night the fisherman holds a flaring torch in one hand and a three-pronged spear in the other, and he carries a basket on his back. The reefs and shore are lit up as he spears the fish and the glare is reflected far in the pools left by the outgoing tide.

A visit to the beach at Layang-layang-an seven miles from port is worth while for the traveller.

Arrived at the beach he has a choice of right or left. The right leads northwards and as he walks along the sands he may see the frigate birds pass overhead in the sky at a great height on motionless wings. They nest in Mantanani Island, a hundred miles to the north east.

Layang-layangan means a place, or a flight, of swiftlets but it is long since any swiftlets were seen in any caves, cliffs or rocklets along the coast. Layang-layangan is a scene of blue waters, golden sands, green coco-palms, cool winds and gorgeous sunsets. In faces the south-west.

Sand and Sunshine

Standing on the beach there in the sunset the visitor can realise how Borneo came to be separated from Malaya, Out there in the ocean lie the Natuna Islands and between the North and the South Natuna Islands there flowed a great river many thousands of years ago. It cut Borneo off from Malaya, and prevented the elephants and tigers and many other Malayan animals from getting to Borneo. The channel between Malaya and Borneo may perhaps grow deeper year by year, for the coconut palms on the beach at Layang-layangan often fall into the sea, and only at a few points does sand collect. The whole coast line may be sinking.

The squirrels jumping about the coconut fronds are Prevost's squirrels. Mr. Banks says that they have passed through an unusual transformation. They used to be a very rare form of jungle squirrel, but when most of the jungle in Sabuan had been felled, Prevost's squirrels changed their home and went into coconut groves. Here they ousted plantation squirrels, who had much more gentle nature, and became plantation squirrels themselves. They do a lot of damage nipping young coconuts.

* * *

Here on the beach a visitor may sit on a log one hundred feet long. There is such a log about half a mile northward of the point where the road meets the beach.

A visitor can measure his own stature against and imagine its height in the forest. Here too the traveller can see some of the curious *penaga* trees spreading over the beach and displaying their curiously curved branches, fashioned by nature for the ribs of boats. The boat builder chooses the shape and size by eye, cuts the branch and trims it to fit his dug out.

To recognize *penaga* trees is not difficult. Look for its close mantle of dark green leaves. As often as not there is a boat shed beneath it. The leaves are easily recognised. The leaf is oval and smooth of edge. It is from six to eight inches long. The front has a dark green metallic gloss. The back has a light green dull surface. The strong central rib is without obvious side ribs,

but if you hold it up to the light you will see a thousand delicate ribs in the texture.

The *penaga* trees supply also the heavy mortars in which padi is pounded. A little study of these trees will add greatly to the interest of a stroll along the beach.

Beneath the Casuarina tree, the fisherman listens to whispers but beneath the *penaga* tree he works.

The fruit of the *penaga* is of the shape and colour of a grape, but has quite another taste. An old *penaga* stands outside the round about at the end of the wharf, so the visitor need not go all the way to Layang-layangan to see one.

* * *

The *rambat* or casting net can be seen in use almost anywhere and at any time along the beach. It is bell-shaped and has a small mesh woven at home with much patience. The diameter of the net is about ten feet, when spread out, and its edge is weighted with small rings of lead.

The figure of a fisherman poised in the bow of his boat or standing firmly on the sand at the sea edge with the *rambat* resting on one arm is worthy of a scuptor With an easy swing he casts the net and it sinks with a soft splash to the sand bed of the sea. The net is drawn up by a string attached to its centre, while the edges weighted with lead draw slowly together and entangle any fish which lay beneath it when it fell.

At low tide it is possible to walk across the coral beach to the rock opposite Layang-layangan. Here an adundance of cat's-eyes, a vitreous variety of quartz, can be found, by digging in the sand beneath stones and rocks

When the tide is at the right level in the rock pools, parties gather to press poison out of the *tuba* root and stupefy the fish who suspect nothing of that sort in nature.

The beach is the people's work ground and the sea is their source of livelihood. It is a sea as calm as any in the world.

Huge logs float across from Brunei Bay and are washed up on the coast. Boat builders fashion these into dugouts, some about thirty feet long and five feet wide, pointed bow and stern so that when rollers on the bars of rivers overtake them, the rollers pass harmlessly by.

The Chinese Coffin maker shapes drift wood for his own purpose beneath the overhanging trees, house builders cut with axe and saw the best of the wood into planks and posts, and the house wife is never short of fuel.

About a mile along the beach, where a little cape juts out amongst the rocks, there is a Muslim cemetery. The cliffs are steep and trees shade the weather stained tombs mouldering through the years. Why do these cemeteries set along the shore affect a visitor more than cemeteries set beside the dusty roads? It may be due to the contrast. The view from this Muslim cemetery stretches from earth to sky, from land to sea, from death to life.

* * *

Near the point where Hamilton Road meets the beach, about fifty yards to the south, the visitor will find the concrete footings of the flagstaffs which mark the site of the headquarters of the Australian 9th Division. Here on 9th September 1945 the Japanese General commanding the 32nd Japanese Southern Army surrendered his sword to Major General G. F. Wootten, C.B., C.B.E. on the termination of the war with Japan.

The tablet is set in concrete and reads:—

HERE ON 9TH SEPTEMBER 1945
THE COMMANDER OF THE
9TH DIVISION AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES
RECEIVED THE UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER
OF THE 32ND JAPANESE SOUTHERN ARMY
IN NORTH BORNEO AND SARAWAK

The Japanese General surrendered his sword and signed the documents in a small wooden bungalow standing close to the sea-shore under the shelter of coconut palms, about fifty yards south west of the stone. The bungalow was a prefabricated building sent out from Australia to house its General.

Near here in another small house the Japanese Colonel Suga committed hara-kiri with an Australian table knife rather than face his trial for the torture of a thousand prisoners in the camp at Kuching. Two hundred yards on, beyond a solitary Casuarina tree towering into the sky, the traveller will stand upon the site where the earliest war-crime trials were held on British territory.

For here, in a couple of tents erected above high tide, officers and men of the Japanese army stood their trial for the murder of the Australian prisoners of war. Labuan was the first British territory recovered. Labuan was some months ahead of Malaya in the tide of reconquest, and these war-trials were the first in south east Asia.

* * *

On any Labuan beach look for turtle tracks. They are common, but boys often cut imitations of turtle tracks in smooth sand to cheat you. The tracks are about two feet wide. On each side is a half circle cut in sand by the flippers. The track leads up to soft white sand above high water mark, and buried in sand you will find a hundred turtle eggs — unless someone has been there before you.

The Chairman of one of many commissions sent out from England to report on affairs had circled the island in a motor launch. Turtles were discussed and cook was sent ashore in the dinghy to look for a turtle fit to make into soup.

Ready for a ride

He found one, turned it over on its back, and went further along the beach. The Chairman came ashore a little later and strolling along the beach saw through his dark glasses what he supposed to be a convenient stone to sit upon. The turtle did'nt mind. It was exactly what he wanted to regain his feet. For when the Chairman stood up, the overturned turtle clung to the seat of his trousers and slid down his legs. The turtle landed on his flippers and waddled out to sea. The party on board lost their soup for dinner and the Chairman lost most of what he wore behind.

Green turtles like high tide and night-fall, when they can leave the sea. They swim in on high tide and crawl up the beach, ready to take alarm at the slightest sound or smell and escape to sea. They lever their heavy bodies weighing up to two hundred weight up the beach to the top of the slope. The female turtle lowers her head into sand, and excavates a crater with her fore-flippers. In it she settles herself below sand-level. With her hind feet she excavates a hollow about six inches wide beneath her tail and for twenty minutes or so she ejects eggs; a hundred or more, soft, round and leathery, and very like ping-pong balls. She returns to the sea a few hours later.

If a seacher be lucky enough to meet her on her way he can flash his torch on her, sit on her back and ride her along the beach back to sea. But usually her nests are hard to find, for she fills the place where she lay with sand and

The seacher has a laborious task poking his stick into every conceivable nook to find the nesting place.

Some millions of eggs are sold every year from the shores of Labuan and the mainland. They have a salty fishy taste and act, people say, like birdsnest soup or sharks fin soup, and other aphrodisiacs. A gourmand eats them boiled twenty or thirty at a time at a cost of about two cents each. Malays never kill a turtle.

Chinese think that the sight of a turtle will bring good luck. Authoritative accounts of edible turtles by Mr. Tom Harrisson, Curator of Kuching Museum, appear in the Museum Journal of November '51 and December '54.

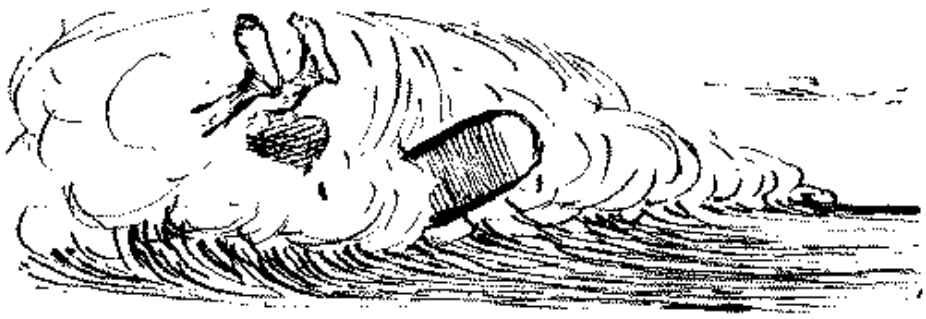
A licence to collect turtle eggs costs $20 and can be obtained from the Customs Office. It holds good till the end of the year of issue. There are 3 turtle farms on the island. To disturb or kill a turtle whilst she is laying eggs is an offence punishable with a heavy fine. She may not be caught whilst ashore for the purpose of laying eggs.

To catch a turtle requires a small fee of one dollar to be paid for a licence which holds good till the end of the year of issue. The use of line and sinker to catch turtle is prohibited and no turtle with a shell, or carapace as it is called, less than two feet in length may be caught.

The time to catch a turtle is when he or she has decided to leave the beach and return to the sea. To catch a turtle as it waddles back to

the sea. a stout bamboo pole and a rope are needed. The job is to turn the turtle over on its back.

This is not as simple as it sounds, if the turtle is big. It has a surprisingly long neck, at the end of which is a sharp beak set with powerful jaws, Having succeeded in turning the turtle on its back you have to rope it skilfully in such a way as to make sure that it cannot bite the rope. You then turn it over again and invite it to enter the water. Make the rope fast to the stern of a boat and tow the turtle back alive to town. The cook at the Airport Hotel is not yet aware of the advantages of turtle soup, but he might learn. A few years ago, before the war, any good hotel in Hongkong would pay up to $HK 200 for a good sized turtle and give the man who brought it a dinner into the bargain.



South West Monsoon

Surfing is good sport in the south west moosoon, at times, but often, too often, surfers must lie down on their boards in the shallows while feeble frothings wash past them. But at right times the sea will swirl about their manly armpits,

successive rollers will bear down, and each wave will have a mightier wave behind it. The surfer has only to time it and then be borne bravely shore wards.

* * *

Keelongs, looking like long fences built of tibong or bamboo, stretch out from the shore into deep water. Fish striving to pass from the flats to the open sea with the tide are caught in a simple maze at the end, and can be taken out from the innermost chamber.

* * *

Most of the boats drifting off-shore belong to Binadans, as Labuan people call the pirates' successors. Binadans hovering off the coast may be in need of water and provisions, for they will have sailed a long way from the Sulu Islands lying five or six hundred miles to the east. They have been fishing as they came slowly across the sea, changing their fishing ground day after day. They have been collecting turtle eggs, *beche-de-mer* (a kind of sea slug) sea weed, sharks' fins and other sea stuff to sell to Chinese to make the various soups of which they are so fond.

But Binadans are not welcome ashore. They know that women are watching their movements with anxious eyes through slats in the walls. If the boat turns towards the shore, voices will be raised in alarm, women will scurry to and fro and men will bunch together to meet these unwelcome foreigners as they step from their boats onto the beach.

These men are cousins of the Illanuns, Balagnini and others from the Southern Philippines.

Their ancestors were far-famed as pirates. They set sail from the Sulu Islands towards the end of the year, when the north-east moonson was blowing. They sailed round the northern coasts of Borneo with a fair wind. They attacked trading vessels, landed on the coast and islands to capture or kill the inhabitants, and carried off loot and slaves. They visited countries as far distant as Java, Banca and Malaya. They sailed in squadrons of from five to ten boats and returned home passing Labuan in June or July with the south-west moonson blowing hard to give them a quick retreat home laden with plunder. Such was the pirate's choice of wind.

Their descendents are more peace-abiding than those ancestors of theirs, but even now every person along the coast of Labuan—and the mainland—views their approach with alarm. The visitors boast that there are seven thousand islands in the Philippines, a number approximately correct, and they defy the dwellers on Labuan to pursue them.

The terror in which these foreigners are held is not without justification. The crew of a single boat may do little worse than refuse payment for coconuts or grain they have taken, or threaten the seller with a bomb pulled out of the folds of their pantaloons, but the crew of a fleet of boats can do much mischief. The Sulu islanders learned a lot from the Americans in the last war.

* * *

Other boats hovering off-shore may be Bajau ts, hailing from Tempasuk, a district north of elton. The Bajaus are intrepid seamen. ne never leave their boats, and have never set ashore. They are called Sea-gypsies. They amphibious, being as much at home on water on land.

Others however, have settled ashore in the mpasuk district, have learned agriculture and ed cattle and ponies.

The origin of the Bajaus is of interest. Their ne they say was in Johore, in Malaya. Some their words are high-court Malay, such as are d by Sultans. They left their home because a princess' love match.

Many hundred of years ago, they say, their ltan, the Sultan of Johore, received offers from the Sultan of Brunei and the Sultan of Sulu the hand of his daughter in marriage. This ncess was not given any chance of choosing ween the two suitors, and her father settled choice for her. She herself preferred the ltan of Brunei, but her father thought that the ltan of Sulu would be the better match. cordingly, her father fitted out a fleet of war sels and sent her under a strong escort on a ngerous voyage to Sulu.

The Sultan of Brunei heard of this and when fleet passed Labuan within easy reach of unei, he sailed out to give battle for her.

Forcing his war-prahu alongside that of the ncess, he took her aboard and sailed for Brunei.

The crew of the fleet from Johore were dismayed. They had lost the princess whom they had promised to protect with their lives. They could sail neither forward to Sulu nor homeward to Johore. Death awaited them at either place.

So they became sea-gypsies cruising about these waters fishing for food and plundering villages for their women. Some settled ashore on islands and their villages are found all the way from Jesselton to Tawau, but not west of Jesselton because they feared the strength of Brunei. That is the story which the Bajaus tell about their origin and it may well be true.

Powerful raiding parties are not seen near Labuan nowadays, and only a few wandering marauders cause alarm to villages on the coast.

Salt and seabreezes, sunshine, warmth and the pure clean life on the surface of the ocean are increasing the numbers of the Bajaus, Suluks and other seafolk.

X X X

For anyone who likes a walk in the jungle, the best route to take is the graded foot-path leading from a point about halfway along Hamiton Road between its junction with McArthur Road and Layang-layangan. This path is called the Timbalai or the Kamseng Road. It leads southwestwards. For the first mile or two it passes through native plantations and then for the last three miles or more through forest. Reaching the beach beyond Bukit Timbalai, the walker can turn northwards along the sands and

and so reach Layang-layangan. A guide will be needed and one can generally be picked at the houses bordering the path in the first mile.

There is little forest left in Labuan, and this area is a forest reserve. The tracks through the forest are often obliterated by fallen timber, especially near Bukit Timbalai, and it is interesting to watch the guide pick his way through forest. Note that a native guide does not find his way by recognising tracks on the ground, but rather by recognising the shapes of tops of tall trees above him. He keep his eyes on the leafy canopy above rather than on the ground at his feet. Each tree top has its own shape, and the guide recognises the top and knows his position. The felling of a tree takes a new aspect when it means the loss of a familiar landmark. There is no danger of getting lost, but beware of bare legs in jungle pools or flooded rice fields, where the ferocious blood-sucking leeches, known as *lintah*, await a meal. A lighted cigarette, or wet tobacco, will dislodge them.

* * *

Spencer St. John wrote in 1850 that Labuan possessed one of the finest forests he had seen anywhere in Borneo.

Camphor and Damar were the main products. Camphor trees rise with a tall stem, a hundred feet high before throwing out a branch. Few if any are left now.

* * *

A walk with a spice of venture in it leads from the north end of McArthur Road southward along the coast of Layang-layangan, about three miles. It is better to go in that direction rather than the other way about, for two reasons. A bus on request or a taxi can find its way to the end of McArthur Road and set walkers down, and can then go to Layang-layangan and await their arrival there. Layang-layangan is a bus terminus and boasts a small shop, making a definite point of meeting, whereas it is not easy to fix a definite point for a rendezvous at the end of MacArthur Road. Also a guide can be much more readily picked up at Pohun Batu than at the Layang-layangan end.

The first mile and a quarter along the beach, past Pohun Batu, is easy enough and so also is the circuit of the small Magindau Bay. This name is a corruption of Mindanao Bay in the Philippines. The difficulty for the newcomer is to find his way up from the south end of Magindau Bay to the top of the cliff. The path up the cliff is near a small gully with running water. The path is steep and narrow with rock to be scambled over. The path rises to easy walking at a height of about eighty feet with extensive views of the sea. Before reaching the cemetery on the *tanjong* the path overhangs a precipitous cliff. Here are two or three vantage points with trees to cling to and a view can be got of the fish pools below. These pools fill at high tide and are beyond the reach of surf at low tide. Fish can be seen in the clear sparkling water of the pools. The

scene here is magnificent. The swelling surf, the shining fish-pools, the rocklets and the steep cliffs resemble the coasts of Cornwall rather than the shore of a tropical island.

Tracks lead into the Muslim cemetery to weather stained tombs. The jungle is rather tangled here but there should be no difficulty in finding a way down to the beach and so along the sands to Layang-layangan. The walk should be made at low tide for convenience sake, at high tide it might well be impassable.

* * *

The highest point of the island is Bukit Kalam about 280 feet high. It is without interest. But Bukit Kuda further north has a healing spring in a shady spot on a hill side. The local people think and drink a lot of it.

* * *

It will be a disappointing walk if at some time you do not see the tracks of wild pig or a troupe of monkeys and if you do not hear the bark of a deer or the cry of a hornbill. Pigs are hunted and are rather scarce. Crocodiles infest lagoons and streams as far inland as Hamilton Road. There is a fierce little crocodile called *buaya-katak* (frog crocodile) who may attack bathers at sea after dark.

During the period of waiting for transports to take Australian troops home after war, dances helped to pass the time. Warm work in this island! One of the officers driving along the

beach near Layang-layangan on his way back to camp after mid-night, stopped for a cool swim. Close to the edge a *buaya-kotak* came from the sea and attacked him. The crocodile held him by the thigh, but had not the weight or the strength to pull him into deeper water. The officer beat him in the face with his bare hands and got clear, but his thigh was badly lacerated and he lay in hospital for a month. Bathing by night is a dangerous pastime.

Crocodiles live mostly on dogs, pigs and monkeys, and if ever a native catches a crocodile and cuts him open, he expects to find one or two brass dog-licences in the stomach. Monkeys are inquisitive and pay the price. Flies often infest a crocodile's mouth and a monkey thinks that where there are flies there may be fruit, but instead he finds teeth.

River Gangarak on the north east coast is infested with crocodiles and is accessible to a hunter.

The stream has low-lying muddy banks, covered with dank and thorny growth, fit abode for crocodiles and snakes.

* * *

Sharky Taylor used to hunt for sharks along these coasts as his nickname shows. His motor boats were based on Labuan and Mempakul and elsewhere. He had his good seasons, and as a side line he carried goods between Labuan and the mainland. His motor-boats ran up and down

many rivers, Padas, Membakut, Kimanis, Bongawan, and Papar. If shark-oil or shagreen did not pay, this traffic did, and he soon showed up the weakness of fifty miles of railway along the coasts. Labuan was hailed as a natural entrepot and the railway management grew anxious as the motor boats instead of railway vans carried the rubber cases.

The advice of the Chairman of the Singapore Harbour Board, then Mr. Trimmer, was sought. "Were a few motor boats to be allowed to disrupt the railway system of the coast?". The answer to that was "no". "And the remedy?" A special wharf due, almost imperceptible in amount, was charged on wharfage on goods carried in motor boats plying between the rivers and Labuan. The traffic in and out of the rivers was killed and Sharky sold his motor-boats to his adversaries. Labuan's natural vantage-ground was wilfully disregarded in this case and Sharky returned to his home land in Australia.

* * *

The islets round Labuan are delightful. Many are planted with coconut palms and all are covered to the water's edge with a dense foliage of varied green. They have their own little headlands and inlets, and a few have tiny islets and rocks for their own dependencies.

Eno Island, or Madang-madang, lies off Rancha-rancha, a promontory near the harbour. Eno is more than a rock. History relates that the land was the scene of battle three hundred years ago. When Sultan Abdul Jalil-ul-Jebar sat on

the throne of Brunei, the abode of peace, his half-brother Pengiran Abdul waged war on him. Pengiran Abdul was a man of great courage and strength, and himself was the father of a Sultan, but he failed to oust his half-brother from the throne. He met his death in a fight on the little island of Madang-madang which got its name from the number of ***pedang*** left ownerless after the battle.

Pappan Island has a lighthouse, it lies close to the town and visits can be made easily.

Pulau Burong, island of birds, in the bay west of Hamilton Point is an old haunt of pirates. Every Eden has its serpent, and in it there are amphibian snakes with black and white rings and flat tails.

There were other varieties of serpents too. Lawyer Harold C. Johnson says that when he first went there, snakes were visible all over the island. He could hear them whistling! People used to shoot them. When the Japanese invaders came, several Malays went to live on the island. When the Malays left, the snakes left too.

Kuruman Island gives excellent bathing, and a fine view can be had from the lighthouse.

Rusukan Besar has a coconut plantation of about forty acres.

Rusukan Kechil lies close to the larger Rusukan. It was here that Lawyer Johnson lived for many years, and carried on his practice from it. It took anything from twenty minutes to two days to sail or row from Victoria to reach it. All depended on the weather.

If his client went by sail, or rowed his boat, he might find the weather too bad to return soon, and the interview might last a week.

Visitors can see it on their way to Brunei and can recognize it by its peculiar shape. Approached from the north it looks like a mummy lying on its back.

Often Mr. Johnson's dugout was engaged elsewhere and then Mr. Johnson would swim out to a client's steam or motor launch and confer with his client in a bathing suit. He would swim back to his island office carrying a roll of documents in his teeth as a dog carries a stick. Mr. Johnson was never late for any case whether in Labuan or Jesselton, though the High Court had to comment more than once on the condition of documents produced before it. Mr. Johnson's description of how the salt water stains came on the documents always caused laughter in Court.

Pulau Daat, another island lying about five miles east of Labuan is one of its dependencies. This island of several hundred acres is held free of rent in perpetuity. Dr. J. G. Treacher, Colonial Surgeon and brother of William Hood Treacher, Secretary to the Government, planted it a hundred years ago.

Smuggling from Daat over to the mainland was rife when Labuan was a free port. Pulau Daat was well sited for the purpose of smuggling. Its central hill is 175 feet high with a prospect of the sea all round. Smugglers with a telescope could watch till the coast was clear. When Labuan lost its status as a free port and paid the

same dues as the mainland, smuggling ceased. Daat now exports cattle and copra.

* * *

Malays are excellent sailors, fishermen and lighthouse-keepers. A youngster readily follows in father's footsteps and the keeper of a lighthouse holds a post of honour. Only once has a keeper failed in his duty. When the British Military Administration took over from the Japanese, they sent a large quantity of kerosene oil to one of the lighthouses along the coast, but the keeper gave way to temptation and sold it on the black market. The lighthouse was not lit again for years.

The Rajah of Sarawak was wrong in mistrusting one of his lighthouse keepers before the war. The late Mr. Archer told me the story. The Rajah was steaming along the coast and looked anxiously for the flash of a new lighthouse he had recently ordered to be built on a cape in Sarawak.

He could not see the flash. He anchored his ship.

"Go ashore," he ordered Archer. "Those light-house keepers are all asleep. Give 'em hell. Give 'em six months each!"

Archer's boat got away quickly in the dusk, and as his boatmen rowed, he could hear the Rajah's voice still declaiming and see arms gesticulating.

"Make it a year!" roared the Rajah and then with a final shout, "Make it two!"

The Rajah might have made it life, but Archer was out of ear shot.

Ashore there was no lighthouse at all. Fishermen in a boat told Archer he would find the lighthouse all right round the corner on the next cape. Archer returned, the Rajah ordered full speed on his ship and sure enough round the next corner, the new lighthouse was flashing brilliantly.

* * *

In Labuan no catastrophe such as earthquake or typhoon has ever been experienced. Tiny islands have been known to rise from the sea within sight of people on the shore and then to disappear again. Volcanoes have spouted mud in the sight of passengers on ships.

At Pulau Tiga, a group of three islands about half way between Labuan and Jesselton, a mud volcano erupted and smothered seventy acres of jungle with liquid mud, It was boiling hot and the jungle trees, a hundred or more feet high, withered in the scorching flow. Trees have begun to grow there since. The eruption was heard for a distance of one hundred miles. That was in 1941.

Between Labuan and Mempakul on the mainland a little island, 45 feet high and 250 yards long, emerged in 1897, when a slight earthquake was felt. The island is still there. But these occurrences are very rare and no visitor need fear that mud will rain upon him. or that the ground will rise from under his feet.

* * *

The town of Victoria is mean. If God made the island, man made the town. Old buildings at the far end of the main street show the style of former days and these have a charm of their own. They are two-story houses, abutting on the street in front and backing on to landing stages over the sea, where the trader's *tongkang* can draw alongside to discharge its cargo of copra, getah percha or damar from across the Bay, while women from the upper story can watch the movement of boats in the inner harbour. Old bricks and tiles from China were the materials from which these houses were built. But the new shop buildings are mean.

* * *

Curios are hard to find in the shops, and the island has never had any industry of its own.

On the mainland the making of weapons became the chief art owing to force of circumstances. Knives and swords sometimes offered for sale by hawkers from Brunei are of all shapes: curved, angled, wavy or straight. Some are hollow ground with handles of carved bone and tufts of human hair. These are *parang* or *gaiang* of the kind used in headhunts of old days. Blowpipes are sometimes offered for sale. These are made from straight logs the thickness of a man's thigh. The log is fastened by strips of cane to rafters of a house at a convenient angle and every inmate has a stab at the end of the log with a chisel until a hole is pierced from end to end. It may take a month or two to do this.

The bore is then smoothed by running strips of cane through it and the outside is pared down to the thickness of an inch and a half. The darts are made of finely split bamboo and fitted at the end with a tiny arrow-head, saturated with *upas* poison (which does not retain its virulence for long). Darts sold to visitors are not poisoned as a rule, but every batch of darts should have a series of gayly coloured rings somewhere along it to be in the fashion and to distinguish the owner's darts from others in a shoot.

The wavy *kris* was the standard weapon of execution in old days in Brunei. Its point was thrust down the hollow between the neck and shoulder of the victim, and a twist of the blade by the practised hand of the executioner ruptured the heart.

Brass ware from Brunei

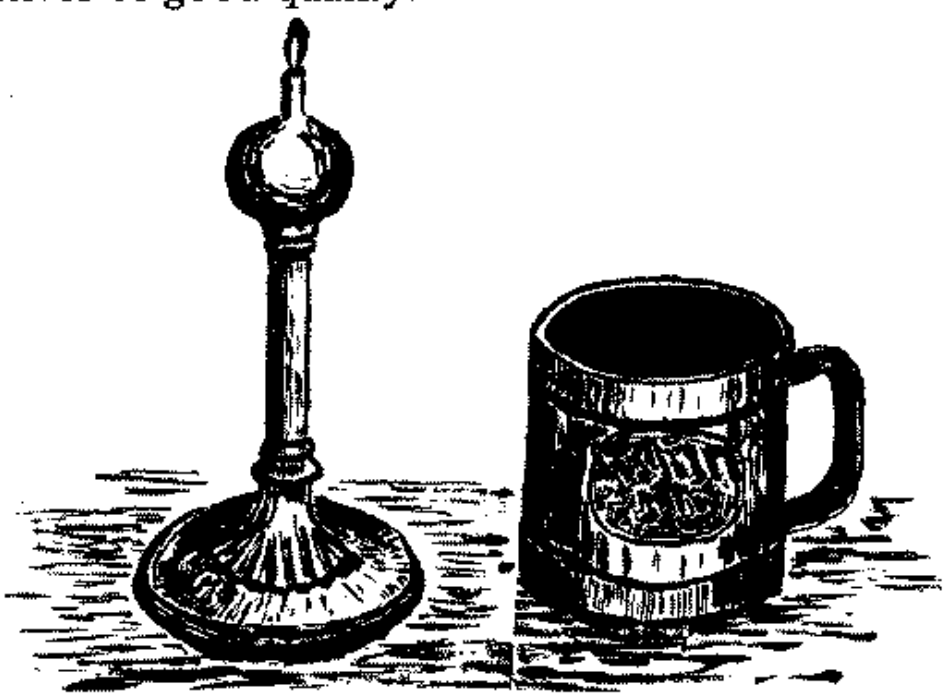
Smiths carry on their trade in most villages in [illegible], and in Labuan. They make weapons

such as krises, swords, executioners' knives and parangs for sale. The *parang ilang*, or long sword, and the *kris*, or wavy sword, sold nowadays are not stained with the blood of slaves. Blood stains can be copied, and the human hair fitted to the haft of a sword to day was never fondled by the hand of a head-hunter.

* * *

The most popular ware for sale are pieces of finely wrought silver ware, made in Brunei.

Silversmiths are skilful tradesmen. Formerly they made their silver utensils out of old silver dollars melted down, but since Governments debased silver coin, and incorporated copper and other base metals into so-called silver coins, the silversmiths discarded coins in favour of strip silver of good quality.



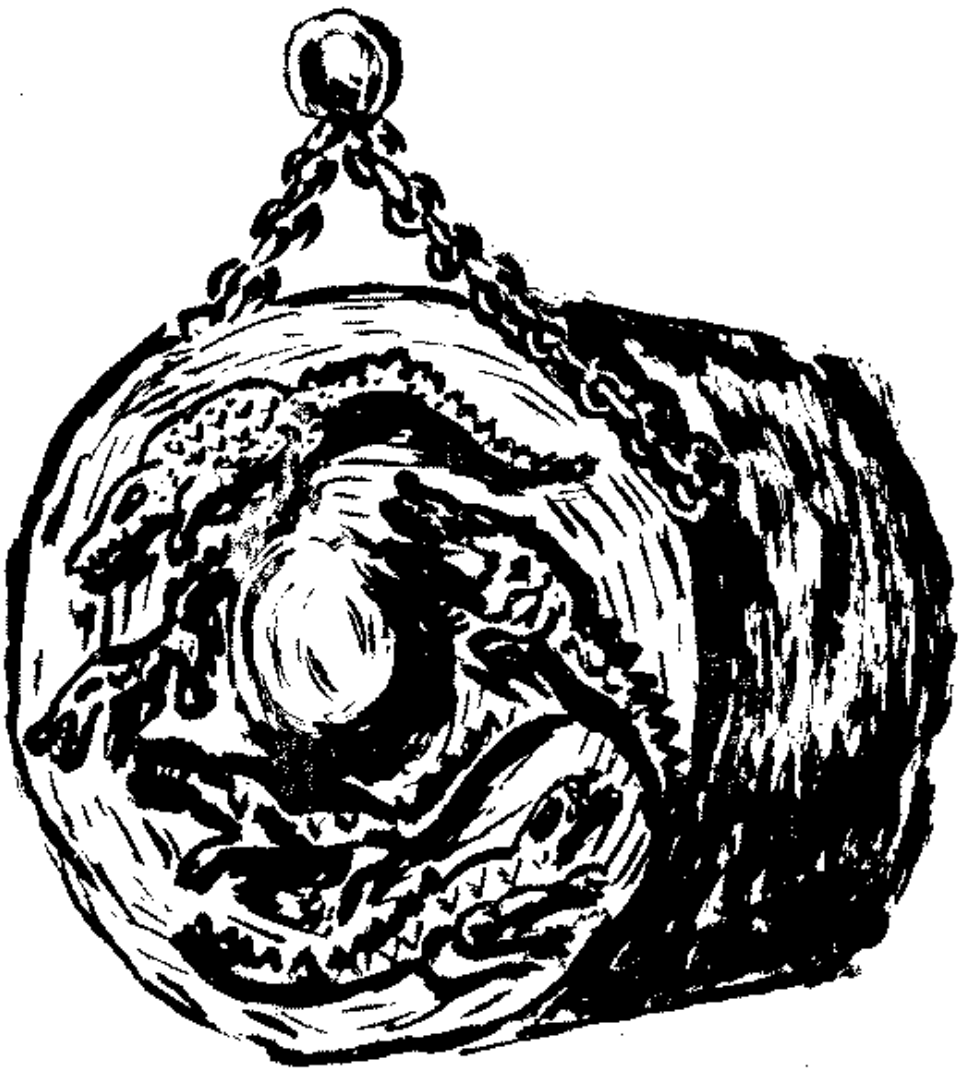
Brass oil lamp and gallon measure

Strip silver requires less labour to beat into shape and gives more silver for the price. The silversmith's workshop is a small hut with reed walls, split palm floor, and attap roof built over the water. He squats on the matting, showing large feet and thin brown legs. He, like the generations of silversmiths before him, wears horn-rimmed spectacles. The implements of his craft surround him, silver, wax, resin, hammers, punches and wooden blocks. He beats his silver roughly to the required shape and runs a mixture of hot wax and resin round it. This prevents the silver shape from buckling when the pattern is being put on. Putting on the pattern takes much thought, patience and care. The time taken may extend to weeks. He uses tools of the most elementary kind, but he produces patterns of beautiful and delicate shapes. In the old days the princes at the court of Brunei were the best customers of the silversmiths, but now they look mostly to visitors to buy their silver bowls and boxes. In a few shops in Victoria, gold and silversmiths of Chinese nationality may be seen at work, and they produce buttons, brooches, bangles and rings popular amongst native ladies, but to get Brunei silver bowls and betel-nut pounds, a visitor must search for a tradesman from Brunei, or find a shop or hotel counter which stocks them.

* * *

Brass gongs and kettles are sold in Labuan. Brass-founders in Brunei are said to be men of

independent character and if they were not their own employers they would always be on strike. They are reputed to be men of rough voice and fierce demeanour. They are proud of their ancestors who forged brass cannon for the Sultans' wars. They wear their hair short and sweat profusely at their job. Foundries are built over the water, and fireclay is readily got from the



Massive brass gong with dragon decoration

surrounding country. Brass-founders have their own guild and trade secrets are handed down from generation to generation.

How are elaborate dragon-gongs made?

First of all the brass-founder chooses a dragon-gong for a model. He makes a clay model of the inside of it and extracts the clay model with the pattern embossed on the clay. On this clay he lays a mixture of wax and resin, covering the sides and top of it, to the thickness of the metal of the gong to be, He models the wax and resin to an exact pattern to be the core to shape the casting. Having completed the modelling of the wax and resin, he covers it with an outside skin of clay, and sets the whole model aside to dry. Holes are then made in the skin of clay as outlets for the wax and resin core to escape when heated.

The model is placed on a furnace and the wax and resin core is melted out. Molten brass is poured into the mould to fill the empty space. Gaps and faults are rectified or filled in later. Signs of rectification of gaps and faults are inseparable from this method of casting gongs and buyers should look for these signs as evidence of authenticity.

Brass-founders by this method can produce castings of the greatest intricacy.

* * *

The hills and mountains of Borneo stand across Brunei Bay, east and south, and recede and rise until they fade into the blue.

From Labuan airfield in a north east direction one can see Mount Kinabalu, rather less than a

hundred miles away. It is 13,455 feet high and is supreme between the Himalayas and New Guinea. It is crowned with a great mass of bare rock. It juts out like a tooth of granite from which all the softer rock has crumbled away. Stunted trees stop at 12,000 feet.

As you approach it by sea in the early morning the pinacles shine in the eastern sun, and often in the evening the pinacles reflect the red sunset glow. The streaks of white are foaming waterfalls plunging a thousand feet or more. This mountain standing in isolated grandeur, fills the natives with awe, and is the paradise of the Dusun dead. If you stand on the streams below and cup your hand to your ear you may, if you know the sound, distinguish the sound of spirits' footsteps tapping their way gently across the river towards their home of rest. Aged Dusuns wear their finger nails long, so that their spirits can more easily climb Kinabalu's steep slopes to paradise on top.

To the Dusuns of the mainland, Kinabalu is an object of awe and veneration, but to the Kadayans of Labuan Kinabalu is merely a name. The Dusuns of the mainland are mostly pagan, but the Kadayans of Labuan are Muslim, and their paradise is elsewhere.

Other mountains round the Bay tower to lesser heights, Mount Lemaku — 9,000 ft. and Mount Siguntang — 8,000 ft.

* * *

Women folk in Labuan hold a very deep respect for the memory of Queen Victoria. They

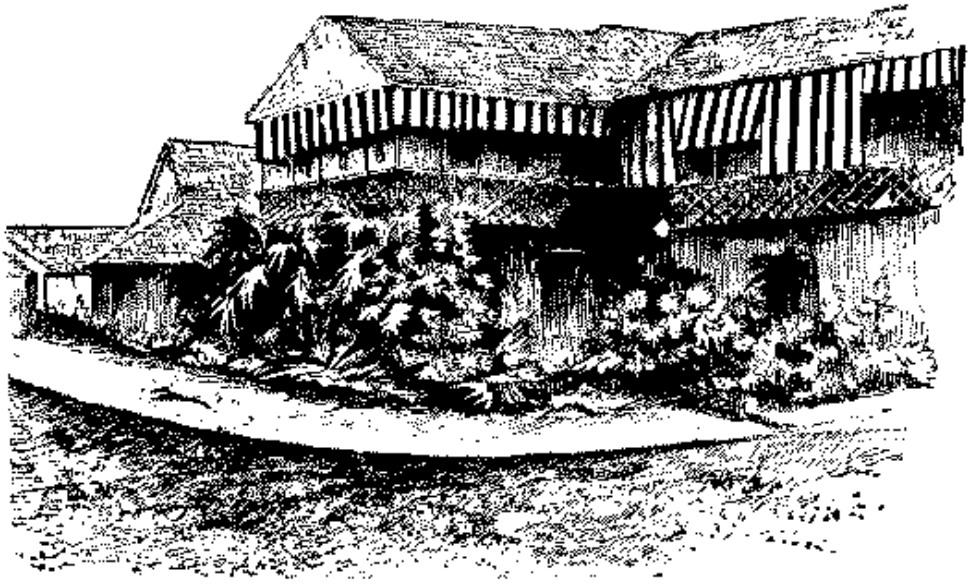
know that it was to Queen Victoria that the Sultan presented the island; they know too something of her history and of her large family.

Women nowadays look upon her as a wise and prosperous old lady, the greatgrandmother of Edward Prince of Wales whom they have seen, and they hope that some of her good fortune may come their way. Note if you can, without appearing to be inquisitive, the gold sovereigns which ladies of Labuan wear as brooches or buttons when riding in a bus or walking in town. These sovereigns are nearly all of Queen Victoria's reign. They are heirlooms. Sovereigns of King Edward VII or George V were plentiful enough at one time, but the ladies of Labuan have no use for coins of either of those kings. The price of the kings' sovereigns is quoted in the east at about five pounds each, but the price of Queen Victoria's sovereigns are priced in Labuan at double that figure. And further, it is not the coin showing the head of the young Queen minted at the beginning of her reign, nor is it the coin showing her as Empress of India in her magnificence that the ladies of Labuan covet so much. It is the sovereign showing her as an old woman wearing her widow's weeds that they want. The coin showing her as a wise woman who had suffered in her lifetime—that is the coin they have revered and have treasured all these years.

* * *

Old Government House, a famous house in early days, has long since disappeared. Bombs destroyed it during the landing of the Australian Army in 1945 because Japanese had made it a pocket of resistance to defend the airfield close by. Its former site is now a public park on North Road about a mile from the town.

Somerset Maugham, the well known story-writer who discovered so many intrigues in the private lives of civil servants in the east, has left a description of this house as it appeared to him. Somerset Maugham visited Labuan about 1925. He describes Government House in his story "A casual affair", one of several entertaining stories in his book "Creatures of Circumstance". It was an imposing house, wrote Somerset Maugham. The Governor of Labuan had formerly lived in it with satisfaction, but the Residents who succeeded later lived in it grumblingly



Old Government House: Bombed and destroyed in 1945
From a sketch by Mrs. Marie Dodd

use of its unnecessary size. It was a fortable house to stay in, with an immense ving room, a dining room large enough to forty guests, and lofty spacious bedrooms. one period it was shabby because the Govern- t of Singapore very wisely spent as little ney on it as possible. All guests liked it and heavy official furniture gave it a sort of eliness.

The dining table is still used and now adorns Residency, a less pretentions house, half a le away.

Old Government house was built about 1852, and low on brick pillars about five feet from ground. Broad verandahs shaded the inner ms. The floors were of polished ironwood the roof was of Chinese tiles. The park nd it consists of about two acres. The roof quaint gables and eaves projected from the in building. Such a house was typical of the houses of those days. Now nothing remains, its levelled site. The bricks were swept up machinery after bombing and spread upon the field. Even the pillars at the gates were ound to powder.

Members of the Royal Family have visited the use. King Edward the VIIIth (as Prince of les) in March 1922. King George Vth (as ke of York) and the former Duke of Kent rving as a naval officer on H.M.S. *Hawkins*, -ship of the China squadron).

Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, coming from Singapore as Supreme Allied Com-

mander in south east Asia after the armistice in the second world war saw only its ruins.

* * *

The park is haunted, people say, by the ghost of a lady. Part of the story is told by Sir Hugh Clifford under the title "A Tale of Old Labuan" in his book "In the Days that are Dead". He names no names. Hugh Low, Secretary to the Government, often walked up the long avenue, known now as North Road, which led from the Court house between rows of fine old trees, past the level plateau where the houses of the Europeans, and also their cemetery lay.

Hugh Low was horrified when he passed a shapeless heap of earth which marked the most recent grave. The latest victim of fever had been buried there only a month or two ago. Hugh Low's eyes gazed on the scene. Boards, and black cloth stripped from the coffin lay scattered. Broken bottles which had been piled thick above the coffin in the hope that the glass would prevent pilferage were heaped close by. The cross had been flung aside. The body lay exposed to the midday sun, but its head was missing. Headhunters from Borneo had taken it! Later, Mrs. Low lay sick with that deadly fever to which there seemed to be no cure in those days and died. Hugh Low sat beside the dead body of his wife picturing in his mind headhunters from the main land groping and routing with their busy fingers in ghastly search for her head in her grave.

The Governor was in residence on the island at the time but the Secretary did not take him into his confidence. Single-handed he dug no less than fifteen graves between dusk and dawn. He buried his lady in one of the graves known only to himself, and when daylight broke he was still filling in other graves. Such is Sir Hugh Clifford's story, which is nowadays connected with the name of Secretary Hugh Low. Legend connects the story with the large park surrounding the site of old Government House, but the graves were dug at the Secretary's house some where on top of the plateau. A Malay gardener claimed to know the lady's grave. It was impossible for his master to have kept his movements secret throughout the whole night, and eastern eyes are everywhere.

Edward Gueritz, Governor of North Borneo and Labuan, from 1904 to 1907, with a long service before that, told me that he knew the Malay gardener quite well, but that faithful man had never broken the veil of secrecy. The secret has been well kept.

I asked Mrs. Gueritz if she knew of any legends about ghosts in old Government House grounds. Mrs. Gueritz said "No."

The worst she had ever seen was after a dinner party at Government House when she went out of the house about midnight for a breath of fresh air before retiring to bed. It was moonlight.

Beneath a grove of trees she saw a figure in white. The figure wandered here and there. It vanished behind a tree. It appeared again. The

old story came to her mind, but the courageous Mrs. Gueritz faced the figure and walked towards it in the moonlight. She met one of her own guests, drunkenly trying to find his way home! That was all. The old Malay gardener was then in her service, the year being 1905.

I have often stayed in the house as a visitor, but I have never seen a ghost. Australian troops were encamped in the grounds of the house after re-occupation of the island and one night a sentry opened fire on what he declared to be a ghost, because though he had seen a dim figure and shot at it, he could not find it. He would not admit that he missed it.

"Shoot a lady, would you?" I asked him later.

The body of a shot Japanese soldier was found a day afterwards and a good ghost story spoiled.

* * *

Recrimination against headhunters, coming over from the mainland of Borneo to search for heads in Labuan loses much of its sting when we remember that body snatchers were desecrating cemeteries in Scotland about the same time. Burke and Hare operated in the same century. Snatching bodies for greed compares unfavourably with hunting heads for the reward of a gladeye from a woman awaiting the return home of her favourite head-hunter.

Moreover was not the British Government paying "head money" to its sailors for each pirate killed?

Kandoi son of a Murut headhunter

Headhunting, whatever its origin, took on virtues such as bravery and attraction of women. Headhunters took heads, because they thought it was a good and proper thing to do in their time. Too often it degenerated into cowardice, as for instance when they took the heads of unsuspecting women and children.

That headhunters searched for heads in Labuan is no mere legend. People in Labuan had a real difficulty in disposing of their dead. Once in Kingston, Jamaica, I met a clergyman at a garden party. He had heard that I came from Borneo and he made his way through the crowd of guests to reach me. He spoke of his childhood in Labuan, where his father served as a Chaplain in the army. When he as a young child fell ill with Labuan fever, his father the Chaplain thought there was small hope of recovery and got a rowing boat ready so that the child could, if the worst happened, be buried not on land but at sea. Happily he lived to follow his father's calling.

* * *

To Hugh Low, the first Colonial Secretary, is due the luscious fruit grown in Labuan, The island has excellent orchards. Hugh Low took up the study of fruit and flowers and after some experiments he produced what was, in the taste of many, the most delicious tropical fruit known at that time. One of these was the Labuan pomelo, obtained by grafting oranges on pomelo trees. For fragrance, flavour and juiciness the Labuan pomelo had no equal. The little

nd never gave him scope for his great abilities later he rose to eminence as Sir Hugh Low, ish Resident of Perak.

n one sense Hugh Low has received the most ted honour that can be paid to any man in part of the world. The tallest peak of unt Kinabalu is named after him. Low's k, one of the five peaks on the jagged summit he mountain, is accessible and it used to be custom for the thirsty climber to pour a ion, down his own throat, to the memory of reat civil servant, and to set the bottle so as to hten Low's Peak by inches. Its height is ted to be 13,455 feet and it consists of loose d rock. Another peak is named after Spencer John a colleague in Labuan of Hugh Low.

* * *

he lure of the island's life grows upon the tor and many Asians are attracted by it. y live in houses hidden away under tall shady , where they find life calm, cool and restful.

* * *

he people are hospitable, and are fond of a dinner. The Japanese recognised this om during their short tenure, and whenever dreaded Kempetai thought fit to arrest any e leading inhabitants, the list of guests to a nese dinner was carefully prepared and ded the wanted men's names. At first the s hoped that the invitation was a step to r relations between ruler and subject, but

they soon learned that the invitation card was of itself a conviction. Inhabitants who received invitation cards hid themselves away and left the island if they could, Those unhappy days have passed and a dinner is now a social event. Dog dinners in particular are much favoured and any inhabitant of importance who is not honoured with an invitation when a dog dinner is put on the table feels himself slighted.

"Fish is number one," said a towkey to his guest on arrival, "and dog is number two." A glutton makes a point of it to go there hungry.

* * *

The unhappy occurence of the death of one of the British Residents at the hands of an amoker in Brunei led to the setting up of a court in Brunei to try the culprit. The trial was held with all the panoply and ceremonial usual in a British court of Justice. The accused was sentenced to death by hanging. A prison warder from Singapore came by Straits Steamship to conduct the execution.

He was a lively companion, and liked a game of bridge. It was royal auction in those days. He was playing with Labuan friends on the deck of his ship due to sail in an hour or so.

His Labuan partner let him down badly. Partner had gone up and up calling spades against his opponents no trumps. The opponents bid small slam. Partner doubled and was redoubled. Dummy chuckled and laid down his cards on the table face upwards and there exposed to view were

strong spade cards supposed to be in partner's nd. The hangman was dismayed. His onents made their small slam.

"Small slam, redoubled, and rubber, I think?".

"Yes", growled the hangman. He reached his wallet with one hand and with the other de an involuntary movement to the left of his k.

"If ever I come back to Labuan and meet *you,*" said turning with slow emphasis to his Labuan tner, "I hope it will be in my pro-fess-ion-al acity,"

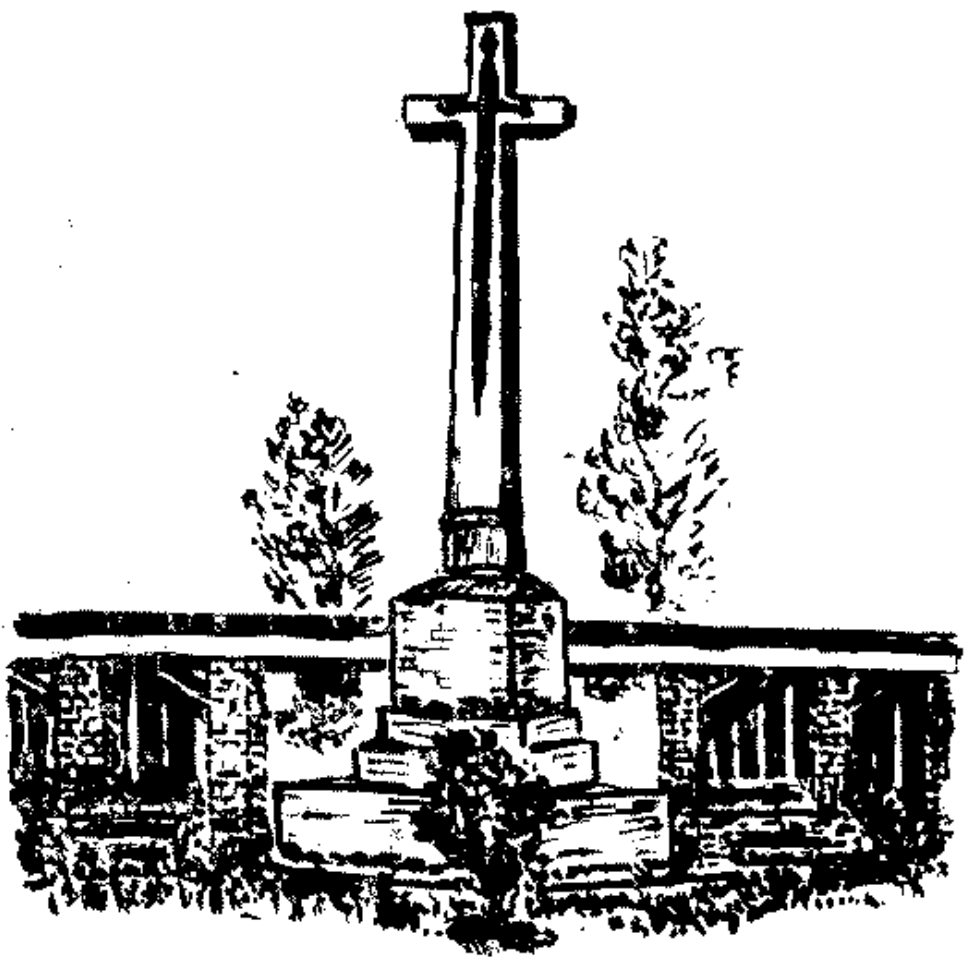
* * *

The war cemetery commemorates the heroes of anese prisoner-of-war camps in Borneo and of fighting services which recovered Borneo the enemy in 1945 The cemetery was e and is maintained by Australia.

t the time of unveiling of the Cross of Sacrifice une 1953, serving men of the British Commonlth who lay buried here numbered 3904. y include 1168 Australians and many British. ny of the men buried here were prisoners-of-. Of 2500 Australian and British service men fell into the hands of Japanese camp mandants in Borneo only six lived. Thousands risoners had been taken at the fall of Singapore ebruary 1942, and most went to slavery and h on the infamous Burma-Siam railway. But uly 1942, 1500 were embarked on a small and sent to a camp in Sandakan. Later British, mostly RAF men taken in Java, and

500 Australians arrived at the camp at Sandakan. Some of these were transhipped to camps in Labuan and Kuching. The suffering was intense.

Then in October 1944 the allies begun their air-raids on Borneo and the enemy became even more cruel and callous to their prisoners. Intensified air-raids at Sandakan forced the enemy to abandon the work on airfields which the prisoners contrary to the rules of war had been forced to begin and "death marches" were set in motion. Hundreds of prisoners were used as



Cross of sacrifice

riers for enemy troops withdrawing from ndakan to the interior and west coast of Borneo. the first batch of 455 carriers who started m Sandakan in January 1945 only six survived July 1945. A second death march was on its y and yet a third. The starting point as before Sandakan and the goal was Ranau near ount Kinabalu. Others were left to die or re shot at Sandakan. The six that survived slaughter escaped from camps along the route with the help of kindly natives lived in the ngles until they could find their way to join the torious forces of the allies.

Others of the services who lie buried here clude men of the 7th and 9th Australian ivisions who fell in the campaign to recover rneo. Bodies were retrieved from all over rneo, but of the total number more than two ousand could not be identified.

Painful though it is to recall the memory, the ross of Sacrifice now stands as a symbol of avery in the face of great brutality and the metery is the most peaceful spot on a peaceful land. The cemetery stands on level ground the top of a cliff overlooking the waters of China sea, and in the far distance the nnacles of Mount Kinabalu can be seen in the ys of the morning sun.

* * * *

The Recreation Club stands on the sea front e to the wharf and visitors are made welcome they have an introduction. Tennis and cricket

Mount Kinabalu can be see from Labuan, distance over 100 miles.

are played, as well as soccer, and the club has done much to fill the gap left by the loss of other clubs established before the second world war. There used to be golf, swimming and racing clubs on the wide expanse of level land near the sea.

The airfield and Air Port Hotel are centres of social life in Labuan nowadays. Travellers north and south, or east and west meet there. During the war in Korea (1951 — 1953) a committee of ladies met wounded soldiers returning by aircraft to Australia. The aircraft landed at Labuan.

"Borneo!", the wounded men would exclaim. "Where are the headhunters?" That is still the feature for which Borneo is best known in the world, and it was always a disappointment to the soldiers that the ladies were not accompanied by a headhunter who could put his blowpipe through the door of the plane.

the north end of the airfield are two eries dating back about a century. Quaint tions can be seen on some of the headstones. is one which betrays hopeless pessimism in gle word "dead". But another is much cheerful. It reads:—

A bitter grieve, a shock severe,
To part from one we loved so dear,
Our loss is great, we won't complain,
But hope to Christ will met again.

* * *

one or other of these cemeteries lay the of Dalrymple, the subject of a ghostly rance in Gaya Island opposite Jesselton. ymple was the District Officer in charge of est coast with his headquarters in Gaya, e Jesselton was founded. It was in the een nineties. A native lady had been tried chiefs' court for the crime of adultery and g being found guilty was sentenced to a of imprisonment. Dalrymple's duty nted only in endorsing the warrant for her mitment to custody, but she seemed to hold esponsible. She was put to weed the paths ht work, but she protested. She found a of heavy stones of blue colour, known locally anite, and setting one stone on the ground nt of the court house, she pounded it with mer till sparks flew. With every blow she d a curse. Pounding went on all day. voice was heard all night. Nobody could her. The chiefs with three or four wives

at home said they knew how to deal with that sort of thing in a *harem*, but Dalrymple was only a bachelor. Her ceaseless curses at him frayed his nerves and after a day or two of it, he ordered steam to be raised on his launch and sailed for Labuan. He sought safety in flight.

At Gaya Island life went on as usual for a few days with intermittent cursing by the woman, but she soon stopped her curses, and told the Sergeant's wife, who served as the warder in charge of women prisoners, that there was no need to curse the District Officer anymore. *Sudah habis*! A full week had passed.

Then one night the sentry in Gaya heard the muffled sound of paddles and the click of oars. It was dusk.

"A message from the mainland", he thought and mindful of the troubled times called his sergeant. They looked over the verandah rail in the moonlight, but could see no sign of the boat.

Then the familiar form of Dalrymple was seen walking up Gaya hill towards them. The sentry challenged, but there was no reply. The figure passed on up the hill towards his house on the top.

"The District Officer has returned," said the Sergeant. "I'll go up and make my report." He went, but found the house closed and in darkness. There was no steam-launch in the harbour of Gaya.

Next morning the steam-launch cast anchor in Gaya Bay. Her flag was at half-mast. The Treasurer went on board and learned that Dalrymple had died on board the day before.

native captain had landed the body at Labuan had sailed immediately for Gaya to bring off mourners for the funeral service in Labuan that afternoon.

"What I could never hear without a shudder," said the Treasurer in Gaya, "was that harlot's voice, calling for Dalrymple's liver to be turned into stone as hard as the stone she held."

* * *

In old Labuan many graves have disappeared. Shell and bombs, and the passage of time have obliterated many monuments and you will now search in vain for Dalrymple's name amongst the tombs.

Another lost grave is that of F. G. Atkinson, the first District Officer, of Jesselton. Atkinson died in Jesselton, in 1902 and Sir Ernest Birch, the Governor, ordered burial in Labuan because there was no consecrated ground in Jesselton. The Governor sailed from Sandakan to attend the funeral.

* * *

Fifty years ago there were several small naval cemeteries along the coast at Ramsay Point. They lay a few yards back from high water mark, and stretched the best part of a mile. A track beneath the casuarina trees gave visitors an impression of the great loss of life which the occupation of the island and battles with the pirates had caused. Each of these little cemeteries contained twenty or thirty graves, and most of

them were protected by heavy slabs of concrete laid flat upon the ground to prevent headhunters digging up the graves to take the heads. Nearly all these cemeteries have been washed into the sea by the encroaching tide, and others have been destroyed by bombing and gun fire. Now only a few graves remain out of three or four hundred dug in the last century along Rifle Range and Padang Roads.

It is strange that two of the earliest graves should have lasted the longest. These inscriptions are still legible.

The earliest are those of Commander Gordon of H.M. S. *Wolf*, 1847, and of Colour Sergeant Sutherland of the Royal Marines, 1847. Other graves are those of — Browne, 1859, Mrs. Davies, house-keeper of Governor Edwardes, 1860, and assistant Colonial Secretary T. Woods, 1867.

The other cemeteries with the monuments and the bones have been washed into the sea. In the small cemetery which survives, every sod enshrines either a soldier's or a sailor's sepulchre. That was part of the price to be paid for admiralty in these seas.

The landscape has much altered. There is no trace of the fine group of lofty trees with a running stream between them where Captain Gordon was buried. Casuarina trees, ghost trees the Malays call them, have grown up, and if you stand in their shadow by the light of the full moon, you can hear the secrets of the future told by the rustling branches.

* * *

The beacon at Ramsay Point is falling into the . Its stone pinnacle, about twenty feet high, on a broad base, has sunk because of the orseless greed of the sea. The tide has roached a hundred yards or more, and the ag of coral and sand to raise the level of the n has hastened the damage. The stone isk is a geographical mark and the longtitude latitude intersecting at this point is a reference a datum mark for all this part of south-east-h.

* * *

A few graves, which the Malays say are ropean graves, are at a point rear the north tip of the island, a quarter of a mile from the . The inscription on one stone gave the name Evan Thomas, and records that he died in the vice of the Eastern Archipelago Company, a al Company which will be mentioned later.

* * *

There is little to be seen at the site of the coal ne these days. Leaving McArthur Road at its d, the visitor can follow the old rail embankment a mile or so through thorny forest, can plunge ough the mud lying in a tunnel for a hundred ds or so and emerge at the site. Only the brick chimney still stands. Everything else fallen.

In Raffles Museum at Singapore there is a map Labuan dated 1875. This shows in detail the mining property as it was eighty years ago.

A town named Edwardes Town, presumably after Governor Edwardes (1856—1862), flourished on the coast near what is now Lobok Temiang in the little bay a mile south of the tall brick chimney. This town has long been obliterated by the regrowth of jungle, but a few bricks remaining from the foundations can still be found.

* * *

St. Saviour's Church the first Anglican Church was sited on the plateau about a mile up from the Post Office on the way to the airfield. In 1889 it was burned down and was rebuilt ten years later on the same site. This was the second Church. The site, though conveniently close to the European bungalows was too far from the town and in 1936 the building was moved to a site at the junction of North and Padang roads near the Court House.

This was the third St. Saviour's.

This move had been made at the request of the Asian members of the congregation who subscribed to the fund for the rebuilding. Most people thought it was a step in the right direction and the Church was as prominent as the Court House or the Treasury. It survived the Japanese occupation, but it did not survive the assault by the allied armies who drove out the Japanese. On a Sunday morning the 10th June 1944 at half past nine o'clock, the bombardment blew the Church to pieces. The catechist in charge had removed all the Church plate at the first shock of the bombardment and stored them in

house near by. But he then had to run for elter, and waves of assaulting troops passed er the site in pursuit of the enemy. The oops looted everything including the church te. They stole the eagle of the brass lectern, d the brass bird was recovered only after the se of a year with the help of the General mmanding the troops.

The Senior Chaplain of the Australian 9th vision took charge and re-built St. Saviour's he fourth) out of boards and thatch on the me site, and it served for three years. But this mporary Church was not allowed to stay, it erfered with modern town planning and so St. viours (the fifth) was built across a canal ere it occupies an obscure site today. In it ads the long suffering brass eagle. Visitors note how cleverly the Australian engineers ve fitted the bird back on its perch. Shell es form the pillar of the lectern because the ole shaft could not be found. This lectern is memory of F. G. Atkinson, the first District cer of Jesselton.

The Roman Catholic Church stands opposite entrance to the public park in North Road. as built in 1931 and is within the diocese of Prefect Apostolic whose headquarters are at lton.

The Church is named Corpus Christi.

The school is named St. Anthony's school.

The famous bell, inherited from Captain ron's mission ship, was stolen during the ese occupation and though the bell was

heard of after the war, it could not be traced and has never been recovered.

* * *

The present stamps sold at the post office in Labuan are the same as those sold elsewhere in the Colony of North Borneo. For very many years, however, Labuan had its own issues and some of these are valuable.

Canon T. C. Alexander, who resided in Sandakan as Rector of St Michael's Church for many years, has written some notes on Labuan stamps.

The first Labuan stamps, he says, were printed by De La Rue & Co. in London in 1879, on paper which was used chiefly for long fiscal stamps with the watermark CA over a crown. There were four values bearing Queen Victoria's head. The next year they were produced with the watermark CC and crown and a new value 10 cents was added. There was no 8 cents stamp until 1882 and meanwhile the 12 cents stamp was surcharged with different types of figures and words.

These surcharged stamps are rare, and especially an error EIGHR. In 1883 when $1 stamps were needed, the Treasurer and Postmaster, A. S. Hamilton, surcharged the 16 cent stamp by writing with his own hand in red ink ONE DOLLAR A. S. H. This stamp exists, both mint and postally used, but is very scarce.

On January 1st 1890 the administration of Labuan, a British Colony, was transferred to the

British North Borneo (Chartered) Company, and the same type of stamp bearing the Queen's head was still continued, but without watermark. Of the last of this type which were lithographed instead of recess-printed and issued in 1894, large quantities of forgeries found their way to the market.

Until 1894 only the one type of stamps had been issued and then the very beautiful issue of North Borneo stamps printed by Waterlow & Co was reproduced in new colours with the overprint LABUAN.

This practice was continued when the frames were re-drawn three years later. In 1895 three high-valued stamps appeared with the correct, Labuan colour but with no overprint. These stamps appear never to have been postally used and are unknown with postmarks. Perhaps they were sold only to dealers.

The Chartered Company had been cancelling 'to order' large quantities of their stamps for sale to collectors, and the practice was extended to Labuan stamps. This brought revenue to the Company but certainly was not popular with collectors and both North Borneo and Labuan stamps got a bad name. The cancellation 'to order' as the practice was called consisted of an ugly oval chop with bars which obliterated much of the stamp and left little to be seen of its face.

In 1896 the Labuan stamps were overprinted to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the cession of the island to Queen Victoria. Then in 1902 an issue with a new design, a crown and

the inscription Labuan Colony, appeared. This type is of especial interest as the stamps, suitably overprinted, were used both in Brunei and the Straits Settlements.

This was the last issue of Labuan stamps. On January 1st, 1906, Labuan was transferred from the administration of the Chartered Company to the Straits Settlements, and Labuan used stamps of the Straits Settlements.

What stamps were issued by the Japanese during their occupation of Labuan from 1942 to 1945 needs inquiry.

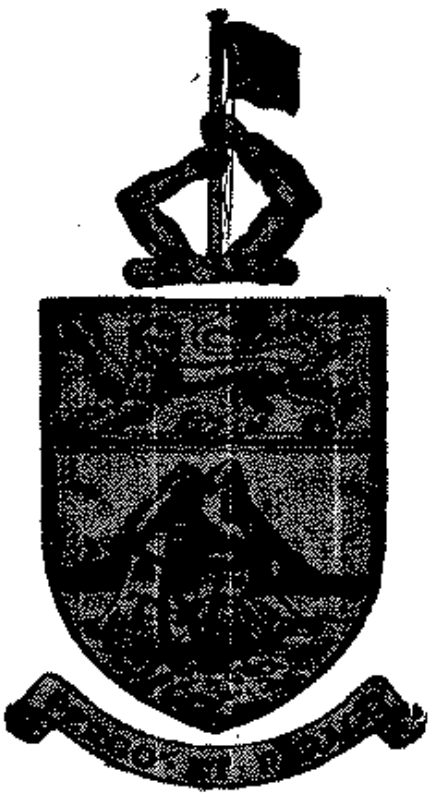
During the British Military Administration Labuan was headquarters and all stamps for the administration were issued from Labuan. These sets were overprinted B.M.A.

On July 15th 1946 Labuan was incorporated into the newly formed Colony of North Borneo, and its stamps are now the same as those of the Colony.

* * *

The arms of the Colony show a sailing ship in sight of Mount Kinabalu. The letter T on the sail is a reminder of services of the Ninth Division, one of the finest fighting divisions of the Australian Army. The letter T is the badge worn by the Ninth Division in token of Tobruk in North Africa. After service in North Africa the division returned to Australia and later set

t on its mission to rout the Japanese from buan and the mainland of Borneo. Its service ever brought to mind by that letter T.



Coat of Arms of North Borneo

CHAPTER 2

POLICY AND PIRACY

Portuguese were the first Europeans to sail into these seas. They were in search of trade—trade in precious stones, gold and spices which had long been a source of wealth to Arabs. Legends of the Golden Chersonese, reputed by some to be Malacca, and the riches of myrrh, frankincense, balsam, cinnamon and casia started a host of merchant adventurers in search of gain.

Labuan was soon in the picture. De Menezes on his way from Malacca to the Moluccas tried to make friends with the Sultan of Brunei without much success.

Pigafetta, the writer who accompanied Magellan, after his leader's death, visited Brunei and left a record of his stay. Brunei had 25,000 families, and elephants added their size and weight to the magnificence of the Sultan's court.

The Portuguese suffered much from shipwreck and piracy. Their losses of ships from one cause or another were great. Eldridge in his "Background of Eastern Sea Power" wrote that between 1497 and 1612, a space of over one hundred years the Portuguese sent 806 trading ships to eastern seas and of these 96 were sunk. In bad voyages the Portuguese lost one ship in three. They built unwieldy carracks of 3000 tons with seven or eight decks. These ships

drew too much water to enter rivers and were abandoned in favour of smaller ships with less draught.

Harbours affording a sheltered anchorage in a central position in seas infested with pirates were badly wanted.

The Portuguese built a fort in Labuan, but there is no trace of it left today.

Other European nations followed the Portuguese and Spanish, British, French and Dutch ships entered these seas. Pirates took their toll, and when the competing nations were not fighting pirates they fought amongst themselves.

About 1690, the Dutch drove the Portuguese from all their settlements in Borneo.

About 1770 what was called "the fringe of Borneo" came under the notice of the East India Company, and settlements were made at Balembangan Island and at Labuan, one on the north and the other on the north west coast of Borneo.

In 1775 the settlement at Balambangan Island was overrun by pirates from the Sulu Islands during the absence of the Company's guard-ships. The Company's fort and township were captured and a great loss of life and treasure was suffered. A few Englishmen escaped from Balambangan by sea and took refuge in Labuan. They developed a small trading station in Labuan, but the East India Company soon withdrew it.

In 1812, seven years before the founding of Singapore by the East India Company, J. Hunt made a report on Borneo for the information of Stamford Raffles. The report is printed in an

appendix to "The Expedition to Borneo of H.M.S. *Dido*", by Captain Hon. Henry Keppel.

In 1824, Governor Crawford of Singapore sent to the East India Company at Calcultta a report on Eastern seas. He wrote that the Sultan of Brunei had offered him Labuan, which had been formerly occupied by the East India Company and abandoned. Governor Crawford's views on the uses of Labuan were quoted at length. He hoped that a settlement might be formed in the island of Labuan off the Brunei River as a coaling station. The seam was at the north east of the island.

A fierce competition existed between the English East India Company and the Dutch East India Company. They both began as deadly rivals and their careers clashed. Both concentrated on the spice islands in the Moluccas and since the Dutch had expelled the Portuguese from those islands, they regarded the English as interlopers. The Dutch won the contest. They held Cape Town, Colombo and Malacca while the British held India and Penang, and in the result the vast wealth of Indonesia fell into Dutch hands.

Then Napoleon overran Holland, England defeated France and the vast area held by the Dutch came into English hands. At the end of the wars, the English returned Indonesia with some misgiving to the Dutch. This short account shows how the British and the Dutch met face to face in these seas, and shared Borneo between them.

The Dutch always were very jealous and tried to keep the ports closed against the British.

A treaty with Holland dated 17th March 1824 existed and limited British and Dutch formation of new settlements in these seas. The Dutch were suspicous of adventurers but our treaty with them contained no article preventing Great Britain from obtaining cessions of territory in Borneo. Thus two of the articles read:—

"Art. 6. It is agreed that orders shall be given by the two governments to their Officers and Agents in the East not to form any new settlements on any of the islands in the Eastern Seas without previous authority from their respective governments.

"Art. 7. His Britannic Majesty however engages that no British establishment shall be made on the Carimon Islands or on the Islands of Battam, Bintang, Lingin or on any of the other islands south of the Straits of Singapore, nor any treaty concluded by British authority with the Chiefs of those islands"

Thus as against Holland, Great Britain had a free hand to obtain a cession of an island such as Labuan. The treaty was directed against occupation by subjects of either state without previous authority.

Great Britain opened negotiations with the Sultan of Brunei through Singapore. The Dutch protested, holding that treaties which Britain proposed, and later entered into, violated the treaty which Britain had already entered into with Holland in 1824.

The popular view was that Great Britain by entering into a treaty with the Sultan did not violate their other treaty with the Dutch.

While the dispute was going on between the two powers, James Brooke in 1839 sailed into the Sarawak River where Rajah Mudah Hassim ruled the country under the overlordship of the Sultan of Brunei.

Rajah Mudah Hassim discussed the matter with James Brooke and asked him a question.

"Which is the cat and which is the rat?" he asked, referring to the relative strength of England and Holland, and James Brooke's answer gained the confidence of Rajah Mudah Hassim.

No story of Labuan would be complete without reference to the work of James Brooke, before, during and after his governorship of the island. He was one of the greatest Englishmen of his day. He gave himself to the service of Sarawak and Labuan and never thought of reward. He pacified the northwest coast and people clamoured to come under his rule. He was no usurper. The people of Sarawak implored him to rule over them.

James Brooke was the only son of a well-to-do merchant of India who retired to live in Norfolk. Young Brooke joined the East India Company as a cadet when sixteen years of age, served in the Burma war, and after being severely wounded returned to England on leave.

The nature of the wound which led to his remaining in England was serious. Part of his

groin had been shot away, and he who was to become a Rajah and found a dynasty never took a Ranee to wife or begot an heir.

His sick leave lasted nearly five years and he then set out again for India. He was delayed by shipwreck and arriving in India too late to report his return by a certain date he resigned his appointment with the East India Company. He continued his voyage and visited Penang, Malacca, Singapore and China, and then returned to England. His father died in 1835 leaving him a small fortune. He could now carry out the project he had in mind of doing some geographical work. He fitted out the *Royalist*, a schooner, selected a crew and sailed for Singapore.

There he paid his respects to the Governor, an official of the East India Company. The Governor ask him to do the favour of carrying presents and letters of thanks to Rajah Muda Hassim of Sarawak, who had recently assisted some shipwrecked sailors. James Brooke undertook to do this and in 1839 sailed into the Sarawak River in the *Royalist*. His crew numbered twenty, all picked Englishmen. Sarawak at the time was in revolt against Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin II. The Sultan was incapable, but his regent Rajah Muda Hassim, though weak, had some excellent qualities. He was the first man, considering the times he lived in, who wished to suppress piracy and promote trade and soon made friends with James Brooke.

James Brooke sailed away to visit Celebes, but returned a year later and Rajah Muda Hassim

became convinced that order in Sarawak could be restored only with James Brooke's help. So James Brooke accepted and was proclaimed Governor of Sarawak in 1841 under the Sultan. His subsequent career in Sarawak lies outside this story of Labnan. Suffice it to say that for twenty five years his life was one long battle against misrule and for restoration of peace, order and prosperity along the coast. The suppression of piracy on the north west coast of Borneo was due to James Booke more than to any other one man.

Labuan was well situated for securing the chief objectives of policy in those days. A beach was wanted to careen the sailing ships, a port must be fortified to resist pirates and to form a base from which to attack them, coal must be mined to refuel the steamers which recently had come into being, a depot was needed to serve trade, political influence must spread to the mainland, and a refuge must be provided to which slaves could flee for protection. This seems a lot to ask for a tiny island, but how well it served all these purposes can be learned from its story.

From the earliest days James Brooke urged the British Government to proclaim a protectorate over Brunei and Sarawak, and annex Labuan. Far from wishing to destroy the Sultanate, James Brooke wished to preserve and revivify it. James Brooke, as Governor under the Sultan, was urging the appointment of a British Resident to advise the Sultan. As long ago as 1841 or 1842, James Brooke in Borneo was pressing for a system of

ntrol by British Residents which was accepted Malaya in 1874 and in Brunei not until 1906. James Brooke proposed to annex Labuan and 1842 his proposals were laid before the binet in London. With the help of Mr Wise, business man, who foresaw clearly the future ealth of Brunei and who acted as James Brooke's ent in London. public interest was aroused.

The British Government was adverse to mes Brooke's proposals, but was anxious to cure the coal fields in Labuan and on the main nd. Negotiations went on for several years ntil reports by naval officers sent to inspect abuan convinced the Cabinet that the island ould be valuable both as a coaling station and a centre of trade with Brunei and the Sulu chipelago. When in 1848, after years of gotiation, Sultan Omar Ali agreed to cede abuan and to give a concession to work the alfield in Brunei, his offer was due to James rooke's influence. James Brooke's hopes were last near realisation. In return the British overnment would undertake to suppress piracy ong the coast to the benefit of traders.

"In order to extend our commerce in these as", wrote James Brooke to the British overnment, "generally and more particularly the north west of Borneo, it is required first at piracy be suppressed, and secondly that the tive government be settled so as to afford otection to the poor and producing classes."

That the annexation of Labuan and the sup-ession of piracy along the northern coast were most entirly due to the untiring energy and

perseverance of James Brooke is not sufficiently realised today. It was he who stirred the British Government to annex the island and take arms against the pirates in the north as well as against those who harried the coast of Sarawak in the south.

Knowledge of the South China sea being scanty, H.M.S. *Samarang*, a ship of 26 guns, was commissioned to sail there and explore. She left England early in 1843, equipped with the best surveying instruments of the day. Captain Sir Edward Belcher was in command. He had other duties besides surveying the China seas. He must keep in touch with James Brooke; he must report on the coalseams in Borneo; he must enquire into the question of a settlement in or near Borneo. He must keep the suppression of piracy in mind. Proceeding by way of Cape of Good Hope, H.M.S. *Samarang* anchored in the Sarawak River. Captain Belcher has left his memoirs and the pages of "Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. *Samarang*" written by him are full of information.

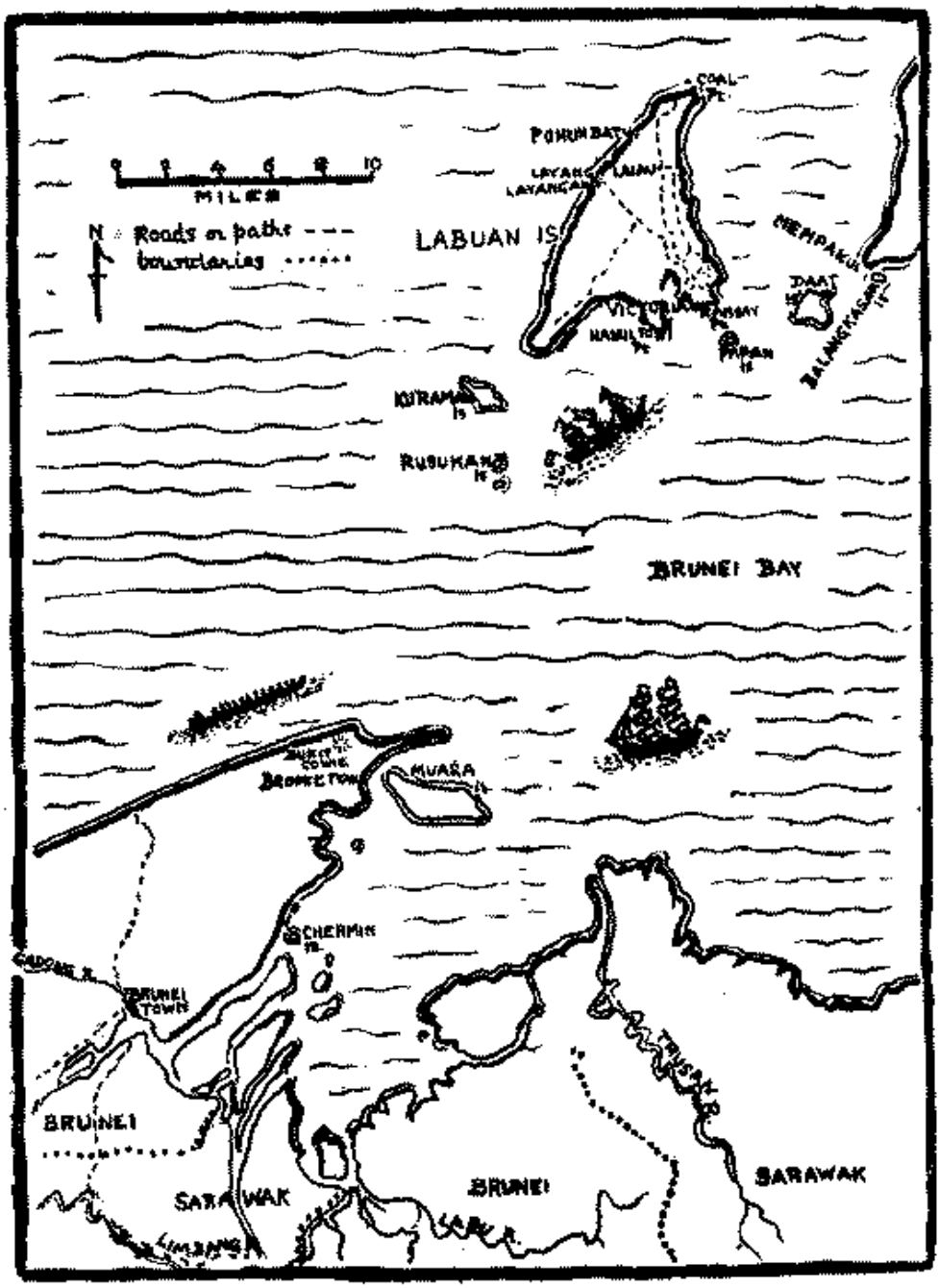
At Kuching, Captain Belcher discussed the position with James Brooke. James Brooke sought for himself and his Kingdom of Sarawak the protection which should be and usually is extended to British subjects by the mother country. He had induced the rulers in Brunei to seek a close alliance with Great Britain for their own security, and as a pledge of their own sincerity the rulers had agreed to cede part of their territory for the founding of a militar

post. So far, so good. This promise had not yet been ratified by Sultan Omar Ali and the question of which place was the best for the proposed military post was still open. Kuching, decided Captain Belcher, was not a suitable place. It lies inland. It is approachable only with a favourable tide by a circuitous route nearly twenty five miles from the sea. Nor, thought Captain Belcher, were there any other places near Kuching which could be made suitable. He thought them unhealthy. Moreover the great pirate base was far to the north of Borneo in Marudu Bay, where Serip Osman's stronghold lay, and a base much closer than the Sarawak River was needed to tackle these pirates.

Captain Belcher, taking Brooke on board H.M.S. *Samarang*, sailed for Brunei River.

An epidemic of smallpox was rampant along the coast and in Brunei, and Captain Belcher feared that the epidemic might spread and reach H.M.S. *Samarang*, so he refused to sail up Brunei River and sent a message inviting the Sultan to come down river to the ship.

The boats, which H.M.S. *Samarang* lowered to explore the Bay, were soon in trouble. Chermin Island, where waved the red and yellow flag of Brunei and which guarded the entrance to Brunei River, opened fire. Ahead of the boats lay barriers of trees hastily felled to make booms for the better protection of the river. A volley from the cannon of Chermin Island did not prevent an exchange of friendly and courteous salutations between Captain Belcher and Sultan



BRUNEI BAY

Shewing Chermin Island guarding entrance to Brunei River

Omar Ali, but the fortress' unfriendly act on this first occasion could not be overlooked. No retaliation was made at the time, but the fortress rude reception was not forgotten. Captain Belcher kept it in mind and returned a year later with demands, including the dismantling of the forts and a proper respect for the British flag.

Meanwhip Sultan Omar Ali hastened down river and there on board H.M.S. *Samarang* a hurried audience was held. Captain Belcher was a taciturn commander, and a salute from the guns of the ship may have spoken with some effect. The audience had good results. Sultan Omar Ali re-affirmed James Brooke's rule in Sarawak, bestowed possession in perpetuity and thus brought into history the dynasty of the White Rajahs.

Captain Belcher thought the island of Labuan to be the best base from which to attack Serip Osman's stronghold in the north. The island offered a good naval position and a central point from which the pirate fleets could be overlooked. Bidding James Brooke goodbye Captain Belcher sailed from Brunei River in September 1843 on his other duties. H.M.S. *Samarang* passed within sight of Labuan, but did not stop there and went on to Hongkong, a colony which China had recently ceded to Great Britain and of which Great Britain had taken possession two years before, in March 1841.

These islands of Hongkong and Labuan are approximately of the same size and both are of

strategic importance, but they differ vastly in their commercial wealth!

James Brooke awaited the cession of Labuan with some impatience, His first step was to free his own province of Sarawak of pirates and this work was almost completed. Northern pirates however, known as Orang laut and Illanuns, still harried his coast and on several occasions he pursued them out to sea with the help of his trusty Malays. He caught some of the pirates, tried them and executed them, and he recorded information about their haunts and strongholds in the far north. But his resources were limited and he realised that suppression of piracy in the north required the help of British warships. Pindasan, Marudu and Tungku were beyond his reach. No policy directed towards the increase of trade and prosperity was possible until the pirates based on strongholds in North Borneo and southern islands of the Philippines had been exterminated. It was the urgent need of the day. Other places at a distance such as Malacca or Singapore were rich and prosperous, but the coasts of Borneo were deserted. The pirates captured trading ships and attacked coastal villages. They seized goods of every sort and enslaved men, women and children.

Their cruelty was intense.

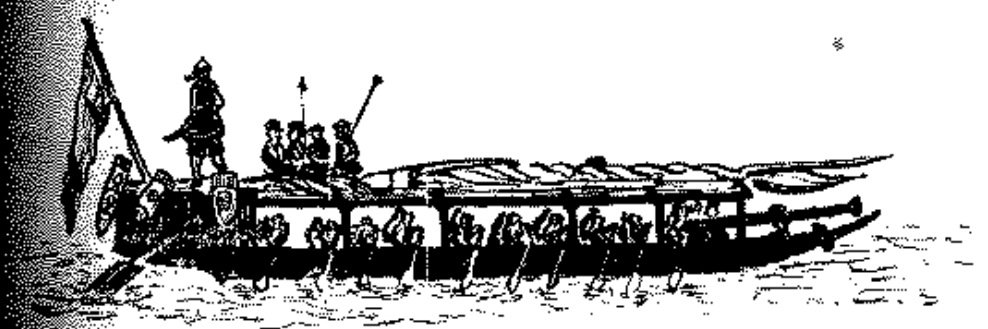
Eyewitnesses have left records of the cruelties inflicted by pirates on their captives. Here is one account by a gallant English lady :—

"After an hour or so the look-out at the masthead reported three vessels in sight right

ahead. James Brooke did not give the order to fire until we came within two hundred and fifty yards of them and they opened their *lelah*, brass swivel guns, upon us some time before we commenced firing. After the first prahu was run down I had to go below to attend to our own wounded, but I plainly felt the concussions as we rammed the others.

"The captives were of all nationalities. It is a marvel how these poor creatures survive under the terrible tortures they endure. Those whom the pirates spare they take on board their own prahus, beat them with a flat piece of bamboo at the elbows and knees, and on the muscles of their arms and legs so that they cannot swim away".

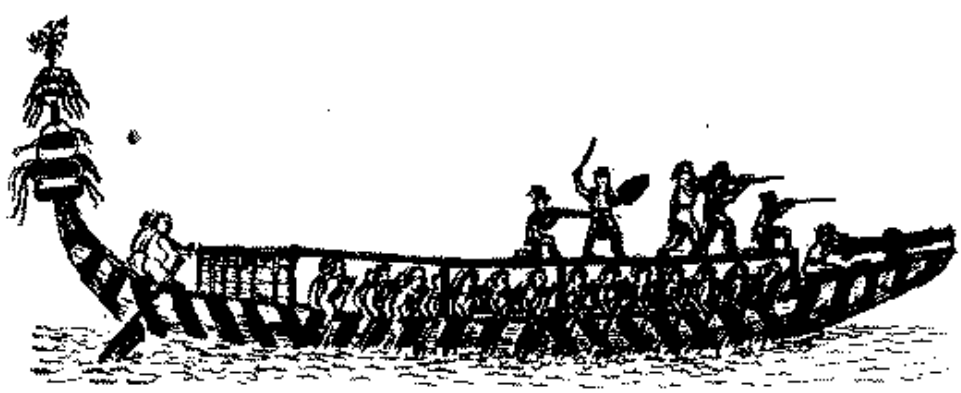
"When sufficiently tamed they are put to the sweeps. Those who will not work are krissed and thrown overboard. They are made to row in relays night and day, and to keep them awake the pirates put cayenne pepper in their eyes, or cut them with knives and put pepper in their wounds".



After Midshipman F. Marryat of H.M.S. *Samarang*, circ. 1844. The pirate boat is a *garai* of southern Philippines. The mast lies with furled sails on the fighting deck. A cannon is mounted in the bow. Pirates brandish spears. A cabin astern and wooden shields give protection. Slaves paddle the boat.

The bigger of the war-galleys were long low open vessels, like the Viking ships which used to harass the coasts of England long ago. The war galleys, such as the *garai* of the southern Philippines, are not built nowadays and are as dead as the ships of the Vikings.

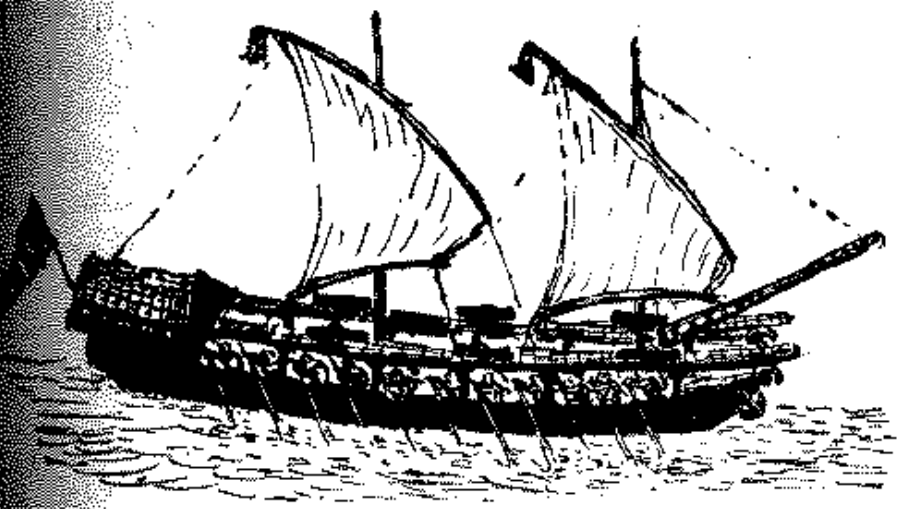
The galleys were manned by slaves, two to an oar. These men had to row and row hard. They were tied in couples by rattans fastened round their necks. When these men were worn out by sickness or fatigue they were thrown overboard to die. The galleys were armed with brass swivel guns. If the galleys were driven ashore by the superior gun fire of British ships, the pirates would take to the water and fight hand to hand with the sailors who pursued them in rowing boats. The pirates showed bravery and undaunted resolution, and the sailors often expressed admiration for their prowess. The



This warboat is a Dyak boat for use in rivers. There is no mast or sails. A cannon is mounted in the bow. Warriors fire blowpipes. The warboat is painted with gay colours and wears feathers astern. Freemen paddle the boat.

tes scoured the seas in fleets and when ught to bay, driven ashore and captured as y as a hundred slaves might be released from r chains and set at liberty. Pirates' ships e of shallow draught enabling them to enter aries, rivers and coral channels where they e safe from pursuit by warships of deeper ught. Stratagem and trickery were needed ring them to bay.

Deception was needed because the pirates were picious and kept clear of warships. The leys could row, while the warships were often almed. The warships, mostly frigates, were metimes rigged up as trading vessels and



After a model in Raffles Museum, Singapore

A formidable pirate ship. Six cannon are mounted on the galley's fighting deck. A roomy cabin shelters the fighters. Two score slaves sweat at the sweeps at the below. A ramp is hinged to the foot of a mast. It can be raised or lowered to let the hook at its end grapple a ship and up it the nimble pirates would climb to reach the deck.

Captain Gordon, H.M.S. *Wolf* was most successful during his short life in disguising his ship. He kept a menagerie on board and when a pirate saw a monkey at the mast head curiosity often outweighed caution. Captain Gordon carried not only monkeys, but fowls, a small flock of sheep, a honey bear and a black panther.

Piracy was looked upon as an honourable calling and Sultans and Rajahs, while condemning it openly supported it secretly. Piracy was the sport of Princes. They were partners with pirates and they took the lion's share of the loot.

In 1843, the Hon'ble East India Company's Governor at the Strait Settlements took a hand. Singapore was still ruled by the Hon'ble East India Company some of whose trading ships had been attacked off the coast of Brunei. Captain the Hon. Henry Keppel, H.M.S. *Dido*, sailed to investigate. At Brunei Captain Keppel met the regent, Rajah Muda Hassim the Sultan's uncle, who gave details of the pirates' latest attacks and asked Captain Keppel to punish them. The regent's letters are on record.

The right to exterminate pirates was recognised by the laws of nations as just and proper and a few of the more enlightened rulers gave support to the naval captains. They saw that the consistent benefits of peace and of regular trade would far outweigh the casual profits of piracy.

Rajah Muda Hassim, the regent, held that opinion. He opposed the illegal traffic in slaves and loot.

The regent's insistence on the suppression of piracy was contrary to the wishes of most others in Brunei, but he succeeded in his efforts. Captain Keppel needed little pursuasion and took immediate action. He too, like Captain Belcher, has left records of his engagements and his warfare, and his writings are models of clarity, dignity and simplicity.

In October 1844, a year after his first visit, Captain Belcher returned from the north and sailed to Sarawak to carry proposals for the cession of Labuan a stage further. A survey of the island, its channels and surrounding seas were now matters of importance.

On 22nd October H.M.S. *Samarang* anchored off Labuan and Captain Belcher made arrangements for his officers to begin a survey of the waters, while he visited Sultan Omar Ali in Brunei to discuss the proposed cession.

The Hon'ble East India Company's steamship *Phlegethon* then steamed into Brunei Bay with James Brooke on board. Captain Belcher transferred from H.M.S. *Samarang* to a barge and accompanied by a gig and as many officers as he could spare from survey duties boarded H.C.S. *Phlegethon*.

Ships belonging to the Hon'ble East India Company were prefixed H.C.S. to distinguish them from Her Majesty's ships. H.C. ships were armed and often in battle, but were not usually called frigates or warships. The ships were mostly steamships and had paddle-wheels on either side.

They could manoevre more easily than sailing ships, had shallow draught and could cross river bars and steam up-stream. The day of steamships had dawned. The Lords of the Admiralty in London, mindful of their great responsibility and cautious of change were slow to forsake the winds of heaven as motive power in favour of coals of uncertain supply.

But the Hon'ble Company could take the chance. They adopted modern methods and decided in favour of steam. The need of coal to feed the furnaces of their iron ships was urgent, and the Hon'ble Company had its eye on collieries and coaling ports. The Hon'ble Company assisted in the suppression of piracy and H.C.S. *Phlegethon* was early in the fray. When in consort with H.M. ships, the Naval Captain took command.

Aboard H.C.S. *Phlegethon* Captain Belcher learned from James Brooke that Pengiran Usup, of the Court of Brunei, was the name of the minister who had put the shore and island batteries into a state of defence a year before and had offered insults to the British flag. Moreover he had used much abusive language to Rajah Muda Hassim and his family, because of his friendship with James Brooke and his opposition to piracy. Rajah Mudah Hassim had been deposed from the regency and he with his family were with James Brooke aboard H.C.S. *Phlegethon.*

James Brooke relied on the good offices of Rajah Muda Hassim in the coming interview with the Sultan to overcome the known duplicity of Pengiran Usup, who was now chief minister, had the Sultan's ear, and supported piracy.

H.C.S. *Phlegethon* steamed up Brunei River. The iron ship passed the fortress at Chermin Island without any exchanges and steamed on between steep hill sides with their green patches of cultivation and clusters of palms. Prahus overtook the warship, paddling up river on the tide with the speed of racing eights. Brown fishing nets hung at the bow and the paddlers strained at their paddles, with their backs towards the steersman who sat perched on the carved stem. They were fishermen going home with the night's catch.

The paddle-wheels of the steamer churned on, and at last H.C.S. *Phlegethon*, spitting steam from her valves in her efforts to match the speed of the Brunei fishing boats and spouting sparks from her funnel in a manner befitting her name as one belonging to the nether regions, forced her bow waves to ruffle the placid waters of Brunei. Brunei lagoon had never seen her like. She was the first to burst into that quiet lake. The Malays, individually alert to change and quick to appreciate something new — though their age-old customs refute it — gave the steamship a warm welcome. She moored at eight o'clock in the evening in the main waterway opposite the Istana. Next morning Captain Belcher, accompanied by James Brooke and Rajah Muda Hassim,

and attended by armed boats, landed at the Palace steps. Captain Belcher entered the Palace and addressed Sultan Omar Ali. He had the assistance of interpreters in the service of the Hon'ble Company.

He expressed his pleasure at visiting Brunei again, but also expressed his surprise that foolish advice could have induced the Sultan's ministers to assume a hostile attitude as he had done a year before.

Sultan Omar Ali in reply regretted that anything should have occurred to displease the Captain, and after an exchange of compliments, they separated for a time lest any hasty decision should spoil the smoothness of delicate diplomacy.

Brunei in those days presented a gay appearance. The houses, excepting only the palace of the Sultan and one or two of his nobles, were built on piles on the banks of the river or over the water. At high tide the houses seemed to float, and the air was fresh, but at low tide a great stench arose from the mud and to European nostrils it was most offensive.

The house-masts flew bright banners bannerets and pennons indicating the rank and office of the owners, the prahus hoisted large square sails, and there was a great variety of boats. Floating markets, and brilliant costumes made a colourful scene. From across the water the mellow chiming and beating of gongs and drums, in every tone and cadence, could be heard. On

every side low wooded hills rose from the quiet lagoon, and Dar'l Salem, the abode of peace, seemed a place of charm.

Some of the sailors from H.C.S. *Phlegethon* were housed in a flimsy hut lent by the Sultan. Here they dined and slept with their arms by their side. Their boats were anchored close alongside. The sailors attended the audience chamber unarmed, but the barge lay on her oars abreast of the audience chamber and her six-pounder gun was charged with grape and canister. The audience chamber opened on the river, and the Sultan sat on his throne on the dais in the chamber gazing with immobile features at the scene. H.C.S. *Phlegethon* lay at anchor with a spring on her cable and steam up. Every sailor carried a loaded musket. Her guns were loaded. One of them pointed into the audience chamber. It frowned in the Sultan's face while a sailor stood beside the gun with lighted tow in his hand.

Sultan Omar Ali and his ministers showed perfect self-possession and coolness while the guns were trained on them. They showed no emotion and even when making threats they spoke with calmness and deliberation.

Each evening the audience was resumed.

James Brooke presented a letter written by Queen Victoria, and addressed to the Sultan, asking for the Sultan's assistance in suppression of piracy.

The Sultan stared at James Brooke in astonishment. James Brooke and Her Majesty the Queen were asking too much. We cannot wonder at the Sultan's surprise, because he was enjoying a good income from piracy and claimed his share of the loot. But some of the chieftains favoured the policy of suppreasing piracy, and amongst these were Pengiran Budrudin and Raja Muda Hassim, who assisted James Brooke in the negotiations.

"We are much indebted to the Queen. It is very good," said Raja Muda Hassim.

The Sultan recovered his presence of mind. "Good! very good!" he echoed.

Rajah Muda Hassin began by pointing out to his nephew the Sultan the danger of foolish action, and the bad advice of Pengiran Usup, particularly in his recent action of defiance. Pengiran Usup had endangered peace with the British. Pengiran Usup replied.

James Brooke who understood what was said whispered to Captain Belcher that so far every word in this exchange on both sides was in the highest strain of courtesy, but that each side really hoped to cut the other's throat.

After a further exchange between the rival ministers, the Sultan beckoned Rajah Muda Hassim to come close to him.

"My father," said the Sultan, "at his death told me to be guided by your counsel and I intend to be so guided."

The Sultan then suddenly exclaimed "I am ." He rose and retired, asking James Brooke, he passed him, to consider that Rajah Muda im was in charge of affairs.

Rajah Muda Hassim, as the Sultan's uncle, mediately assumed control. He upraided giran Usup for his misdeeds and sent him other ministers to the Sultan in his private rtments to ask for orders that the batteries at rmin and Brunei be disarmed at once, lest further offence should be offered to the ish. The ministers returned and said that Sultan assented. Rajah Muda Hassim then ed orders for the batteries to be demolished for the work to be completed before dawn.

The British officers having thus attained tery of the situation and set their own man in er, could take things more easily. Negotiations tinued for the next few days. James Brooke ased for the drawing of a document which uld confirm and secure the cession of Labuan lready promised. He and the Sultan had cussed it before and the time had come to clude the bargain. Rajah Muda Hassim being charge of the negotiations on the Sultan's lf, and friendly to James Brooke, the document soon drafted. It took the form of a letter to ddressed by Sultan Omar Ali of Brunei to Queen of England, and was written in courtly e.

"The Sultan of Brunei to the Queen of England," it began. "This letter is address- ed by Sultan Omar Ali and Rajah Muda

Hassim as rulers of the state of Brunei to th
Queen of England. The Sultan and Raj
Mudah Hassim desire to gain the friendshi
and aid of the Queen of England for th
suppression of piracy and the encouragemen
and extension of trade, and to assist in fo
warding these objects, they are willing t
cede to the Queen of England the island
Labuan and its islets on such terms as ma
hereafter be arranged by any person appointe
by Her Majesty.

"The Sultan and Rajah Muda Hassim co
sider that an English settlement on Labuan wi
be of great service to the natives of the co
and will draw a considerable trade from th
north and from China. Should Her Majes
decide upon the measure the Sultan an
Rajah Muda Hassim promise to give ever
help to the British authorities."

To this document the seals of Sultan Omar Al
Rajah Mudah Hassim and the Pengirans we
formally attached.

Even Pengiran Usup, who represented th
pirates at the Sultan's court, signed the letter
favour of suppression of piracy.

It was on the strength of this document th
the Sultan was later forced to sign a form
cession of Labuan contrary to the wish of h
future ministers, and it was this document whi
cost Raja Muda Hassim his life.

The terms were rather one-sided, because th
Sultan promised to give the island of Labuan an
every assistance to the British, who on their su

mised nothing. They might withdraw at any e. They gave no promise to stamp out piracy. was taken for granted.

ames Brooke's view was that he had obtained romise of Labuan in writing, and this would litate the cession if the British government ded to found a colony there. He had prepared people in Brunei for the change and he felt that most of them would approve of the ion. It would please Rajah Muda Hassim his half-brother Pengiran Budrudin, who e the two ablest men in Brunei. However her of these men lived to see the fulfilment heir plans, though the result came about as es Brooke had foretold.

aptain Belcher's next step was to find the l-seams. He and James Brooke came to the clusion that the range of hills between Brunei Muara contained plenty of coal. Satisfied this discovery they took leave of Rajah da Hassim and Pengiran Budrudin.

he farewell was friendly. The two ministers grateful for what had been done for them Captain Belcher honoured the City of Waters, Salam, abode of peace, with a salute from guns of H.C.S. *Phlegethon*. The ship steamed out into the river lest the concussion of a e of twenty one guns should prove too much he flimsy houses built over the water. The n himself did not appear in person, but reds of prahus came out from beneath the ng stages, raced the ship and many were rned in the waves caused by her paddle-

wheels while she steamed full speed down the river.

Rejoining his ship, H.M.S. *Samarang*, at Labuan, Captain Belcher finished the survey of the channels to the south before sunset, and moved his ship to the channel leading in a northerly direction before dark and passing between the islands he anchored in the new harbour. In honour of the Queen and in confidence that the flag would soon wave proudly over it he named it Port Victoria.

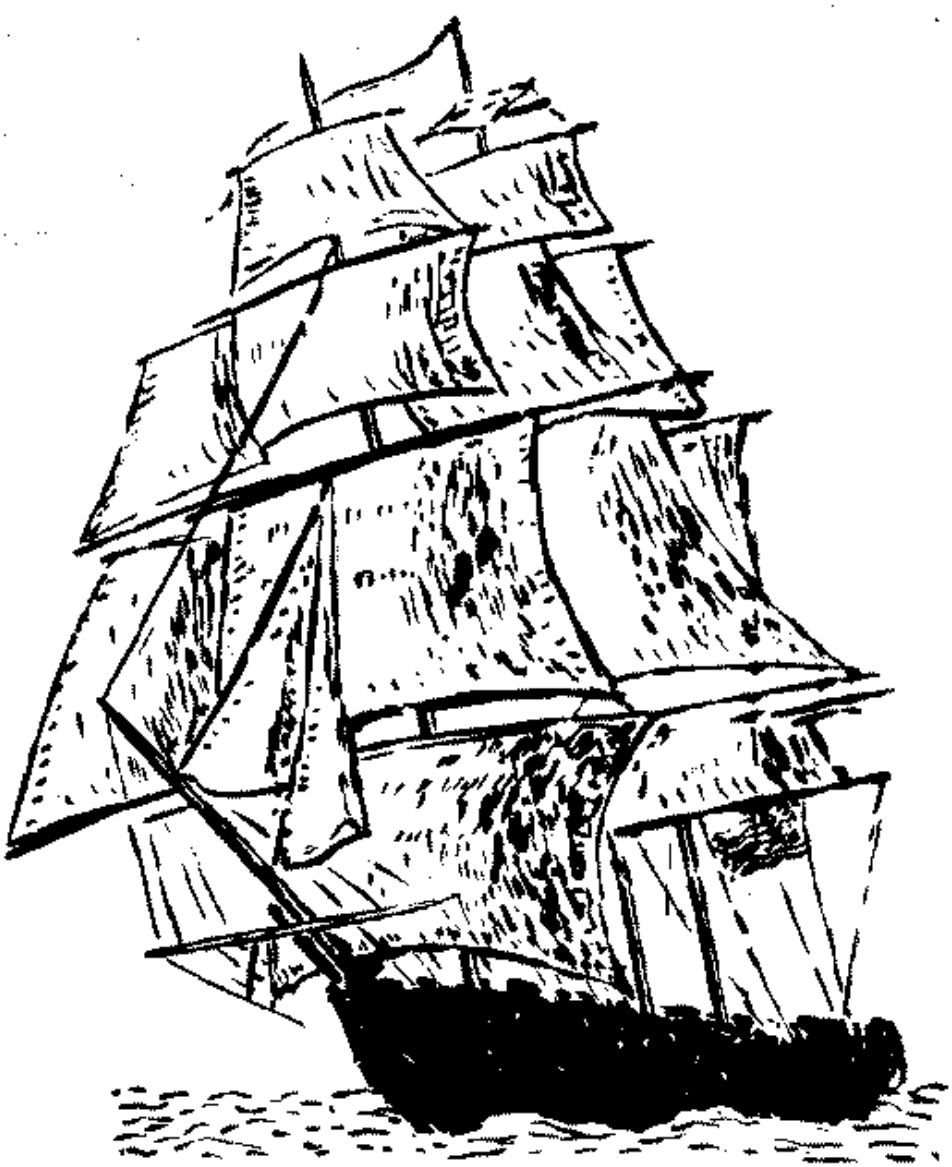
Next day Captain Belcher and James Brooke searched the island for coal-seams. Following the east shore, they found a seam at the northern end where coal showed itself at one or two points. They thought there was an abundant supply beneath, and packed up specimens to be sent to London with other samples from the seams in Brunei. The result of the examinations in London was satisfactory and the coal was reported to be of a quality quite equal to the best Newcastle coal.

Captain Belcher however was never enthusiastic about the future of Labuan coal and held the opinion that the coal could be shipped from England at a cost less than mining it in either Brunei or Labuan. He thought that the difficulty of recruiting labour to work the mines would be insuperable. But on the other hand he thought that the soil of Labuan was rich for agriculture. The northern part of the island was covered with a black loam, highly charged with oxide of iron

and growing good timber. The vegetation flourished luxuriantly. There was in the season abundant water, especially on the south west side of the island where several streams flowed out into the sea. Captain Belcher and James Brooke explored the island thoroughly and their findings have been proved to be accurate. In those days there were no habitations on the island except a few fishermen's huts and the fishermen knew so little about the channels that they thought the channel between Labuan and Mempakul on the mainland Borneo to be unsafe for shipping. However her indefatigable consort, H.C.S. *Phlegethon*, took H.M.S. *Samarang* in tow and steamed safely through the channel leading northward until she discovered the dangerous reefs off Pulau Tiga on the course set by ships of the Straits Steamship Company today.

Captain Belcher's description of this visit during 1844 is the earliest record of a tour in Labuan. Doubtless his description did much to influence the British Government two years later to accept the Sultan's offer and take possession of the island. It was late in the year when Captain Sir Edward Belcher, having performed his duty in Brunei and Labuan bid James Brooke goodbye and sailed to his station in China, under orders to proceed with utmost speed.

H.M.S. *Samarang* had left only a few weeks when the tall masts of U.S.S. *Constitution* and her snow-white sails of cotton, whiter than any British canvas, towered above every ship in Brunei Bay. The Americans had heard of the



U.S.S. CONSTITUTION

British effort to get a concession and they had no intention of being left out of the race.

U.S.S. *Constitution* was one of the most famous of American ships of war. She carried thirty 24-pounders on her main deck and twenty two 32-pounder carronades on her upper deck. Built in Boston she began her famous career in 1798 and here she was in 1844 forty six years later off the coast of Labuan in Brunei Bay,

The British had no ship in these waters to match her. In contrast H.C.S. *Nemesis* which will be in action in a later chapter carried two 32-pounders only. U.S.S. *Constitution,* built in a port famous for its shipwrights, was credited with the remarkable speed of 13½ knots. Her main mast was 104 feet tall. Her length was 204 feet, her beam 44 feet, and her draught 24 feet. Lord Nelson's flagship, H.M.S. *Victory* whose battle days were over, was then lying in Portsmouth as flagship to the Port Admiral, and measured along the gundeck 186 feet. These details show what a powerful ship the Americans had sent to support their claims in Brunei.

The Americans had taken an interest in south-east Asia as long ago as 1800. In 1801 thirty four Americans ships made successful voyages from America to Canton, and many others had made a good thing out of selling gunpowder to pirates in Malacca Straits. The United States had a policy of demanding benefits from other nations at least as good as those given to any other. They insisted on rights equal to any other favoured nation. If Brunei granted rights to Great Britain,

then the United States claimed rights also. Having learned that Sultan Omar Ali had promised concessions to Sir James Brooke and to Queen Victoria the Captain of U.S.S. *Constitution* paid a call at the *Istana*.

The American Captain had instructions to offer immediate protection to Sultan Omar Ali with a treaty of friendship and commerce on the ground that the coal seams had been ceded to America and that the right of exclusive trade also had been granted.

If the Americans had remained longer and had been better versed in Asian politics, there can be no doubt that Sultan Omar Ali and his evil counseller Pengiran Usup, who hated the British, would have formed an alliance with the United States. The Sultan, already committed, could give the Americans no satisfaction. The Editor of the Singapore Free Press however took occasion to abuse the Sultan for having the "head of an idiot and the heart of a pirate," though on this occasion he had acted up to his promises with the British. Did the Editor think that development would be faster under the silver-knobbed stick of Uncle Sam than under the motherly care of the Queen's government?

U.S.S. *Constitution* sailed away having failed in her mission but Sultan Omar Ali some years later, in 1850, in spite of British protests signed a treaty giving the United States privileges of the most favoured nation — too late because by that time the British were securely in possession,

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CHAPTER 3

ANNEXATION

1845 Captain Bethune, H.M.S. *Driver*, sailed om Singapore to visit Labuan and the *pore Free Press* of 27th March 1845 records he brought back specimens of excellent coal. s Brooke also records in his diaries that he ed the coal seams with Captain Bethune and Wise.

mes Brooke continued to press for the cession Labuan and for an attack on the pirates' nghold in the north and in reply to his repeated eals Admiral Sir Thomas Cochrane sailed h from Hong Kong, passed Labuan and hored in Brunei Bay. His squadron made a ve show. H.M. Ships *Agincourt*, 74 guns, *dalus*, *Cruiser*, *Wolverine* and *Vixen* were pported by H.C. Ships *Pluto* and *Nemesis*. The t three were steamships. The whole squadron ut upriver. James Brooke accompanied the dmiral.

The Sultan was diplomatic. He blamed ngiran Usup for the capture of a British trading ip which had the double misfortune to be first uck by lightning and then pirated. When t minister was summoned to attend and failed appear a shot was fired over his house. ngiran Usup had the audacity to reply from

his home battery. A warship opened fire on his house and in a trice his house was in flames and he had fled into the jungle.

This matter having been settled, the Admiral took James Brooke on board and sailed north in August 1845 to Kudat to attack the pirates' stronghold in Marudu Bay. This was a most successful affair and the exploit is well told in naval histories of the day. After reducing the stronghold at Langkon, Admiral Crochrane returned to Brunei to deal with further trouble in that town and then sailed for China leaving his captains to finish off the troublesome business. The suppression of piracy in the north took another three or four years of vigilance and warfare.

Meanwhile the British Government had at long last accepted Sultan Omar Ali's offer and had decided to annex Labuan as a British possession.

The British Government, accepting the advice of the Foreign Office which favoured the cession, rather than that of the Colonial office which opposed it, had made up its mind. The position of Labuan relative to China was good. Trade with the northern parts of Borneo could be encouraged. The flank of sea routes used by the British Navy and merchant ships could be protected.

Labuan was central for the suppression of piracy and it brought the northern strongholds within reach. The island was tiny, so that it could be easily defended. A frigate or two, a battalion of troops and a battery of artillery would

constitute a defence powerful enough to protect the island. Above all coal was available. The Union Jack must be hoisted without further delay. A treaty of cession with Sultan Omar Ali must be concluded.

Meanwhile serious trouble broke out in Brunei, that restless city, miscalled the Abode of Peace. Captain Belcher and James Brooke, as recorded in the last chapter, had left their friends Raja Muda Hassim and Pengiran Barudin in power under the Sultan. They lived under his protection and prospered for a time. Raja Muda Hassim was named as successor to the throne and had received the title of Sultan Muda. They were the Sultan's uncles, men of power, and they forced the Sultan to decree that their old enemy Pengiran Usup be stangled, and stangled he was. He had retired to his feudal estates in Kimanis, in the Bay north east of Labuan, was caught off his guard and garrotted. But the Sultan had not forgotten the part which his uncles had played in suppressing piracy and siding with the British. The loss of income preyed upon his mind.

Induced by Haji Saman and choosing a favourable time, he secretly sentenced them both to death. Silently by night armed bands surrounded their houses. In the darkness Pengiran Barudin fought like a hero. His followers were cut down. His sister, a faithful concubine, and a young slave named Japar fought by his side. Desperately wounded, with his left wrist broken, and streaming with blood, Pengiran Barudin withdrew into the recesses of his house with the two women and the

boy. To a barrel of gunpowder hidden there he applied a match and blew himself and his women to death. The slave-boy lived.

Raja Muda Hassim was a man of different temperament from his brother. He sent a message to the Sultan pleading for his life, and when this had been refused he shot himself with a pistol.

Such had been the untimely fate of the two men in Brunei who had thrown in their lot with the British and had gained a promise of a cession of Labuan from the unwilling Sultan. The Sultan delighted at his success, and believing himself to be *kabal*, invulnerable, had built new forts round his city and boasted that he would drive all foreigners out of Brunei. He massacred most of the members of the two dead ministers' families in cold blood. Thanks to the young slave Japar who survived, news of these events soon reached the ears of James Brooke. He reported to London and appealed to the Admiral of the China Squadron for help. Admiral Cochrane at once put to sea from Singapore with a powerful fleet. This time his squadron included H.M. Ships *Agincourt*, 74 guns, *Iris*, *Hazard*, *Ringdove* and *Spiteful*, James Brooke's *Royalist* and H.C.S. *Phlegethon*. Two of these ships, *Spiteful* and *Phlegethon* were steamships. They sailed from Singapore on June 18th 1846 in fine weather, and on July 8th they bombarded and destroyed the new forts guarding Brunei River and swept upstream to the city. Here the ships bombarded the city defences and Captain Mundy, H.M.S. *Iris*, entered

unopposed. The Sultan, like others before him, sought safety in the jungle. Captain Mundy burned the *Istana* down to the water line and reminded the Sultan of this act when he met him a year later. Two ministers were appointed as regents, but the Sultan would not come forth from his hiding place and Admiral Cochrane could not spare the time to wait. He sailed north with H.M. Ships past Labuan to Tempasuk, bombarded and reduced pirates' strongholds there and so returned to China, detaching H.M.S. *Iris* with two other ships to watch events in Brunei Bay.

While the South China fleet lay in Brunei Bay on the Admiral's first visit, some of his officers had crossed the Bay to explore Labuan and on their return they had reported that there was no water, or insufficient water to supply an establishment of the size needed to defend the island. So Captain Belcher, H.M.S. *Samarang*, was sent for and this time he was asked to direct his attention principally to the discovery of sufficient water to support an establishment on the island. There were also a few survey matters requiring attention. Captain Belcher thought that these unfavourable reports were not justified. He searched again, and in the south west bay he met with sources which promised plenty of water. Rounding the south west cape of the island he searched the large sandy bay between Kiamsam and Rancha-rancha and met with three powerful streams. Tracing one of the streams inland he accepted it as a sufficient supply. Though the island is

traversed by several streams, only two streams flow at all seasons of the year, but water could be found everywhere by boring or digging.

Then Captain Belcher got involved in the politics of Brunei.

Negotiations were delayed and he could do nothing without James Brooke's advice.

H.M.S. *Samarang* sailed for Sarawak River in search of him, but he was away on duty and no one knew when he would be back. Captain Belcher waited for his return, but provisions began to run short. Captain Belcher could wait no longer and he cleared for Singapore leaving the Borneo coast for the last time.

Here we take leave of the gallant Captain.

Though Labuan owes its annexation largely to the reports and the two visits of Captain Sir Edward Belcher in H.M.S. *Samarang*, in October 1844 and again in 1846, he was careful in his diaries to give a warning against some of the too hopeful estimates made about the immediate increase of trade. Some people thought there would be a boom. "I will not yield," wrote Captain Belcher, "to anyone in feelings of deep interest for the success of our new possession". But he continues, "The establishment of a British port or colony on any part of the northern shores of Borneo will not induce any of the native authorities to send there for sale."

The small traders, thought Captain Belcher, would creep alongshore and find their way to the best market. Even if the colony should be firmly established a satisfactory state of affairs would be

slow in coming, because there must be a long delay in the development of the mainland of Borneo and its people. Captain Belcher's view was right, as the result of a hundred years of slow growth in commerce has proved. His forecast seems to have been much more correct than those who expected another port like Penang, Singapore or Hongkong to spring into being. Others looked through rose-tinted spectacles, but Captain Belcher discerned the future of Labuan with foresight and accuracy.

The responsibility for the survey of Labuan and for advice as to its sufficiency and suitability to become a colony lay upon Captain Belcher. That phase was over and the task of annexation was given to Captain Mundy, H.M.S. *Iris*. He was equal to the occasion. With the memory of the mounting flames of the *Istana* fired by his marines still fresh in his mind, with the broadsides of his three ships heavier than any shore batteries likely to oppose him, with a coutenance that could outface any Pengiran, and a crimson umbrella more colourful than the royal yellow, Captain Mundy's patience and diplomacy proved decisive.

His first step was to pay a visit to the city of Brunei to greet the Sultan who had emerged from his hiding place in the jungle and had met James Brooke, and to renew those friendly relations with H.H. which had been so rudely shattered during Admiral Cochrane's second visit by a bombardment of the city and the burning of the palace.

H.M.S. *Iris* sailed from northern waters, and put in at Papar and then at Kimanis. She dropped anchor and received visitors on board. Leaving the coast of Borneo she sailed outside Labuan and anchored in Brunei River, seventeen miles below the city late in August 1846. Vessels greeted the warship, hoisted white flags to show that they were peaceful trading vessels, and visitors of rank came aboard.

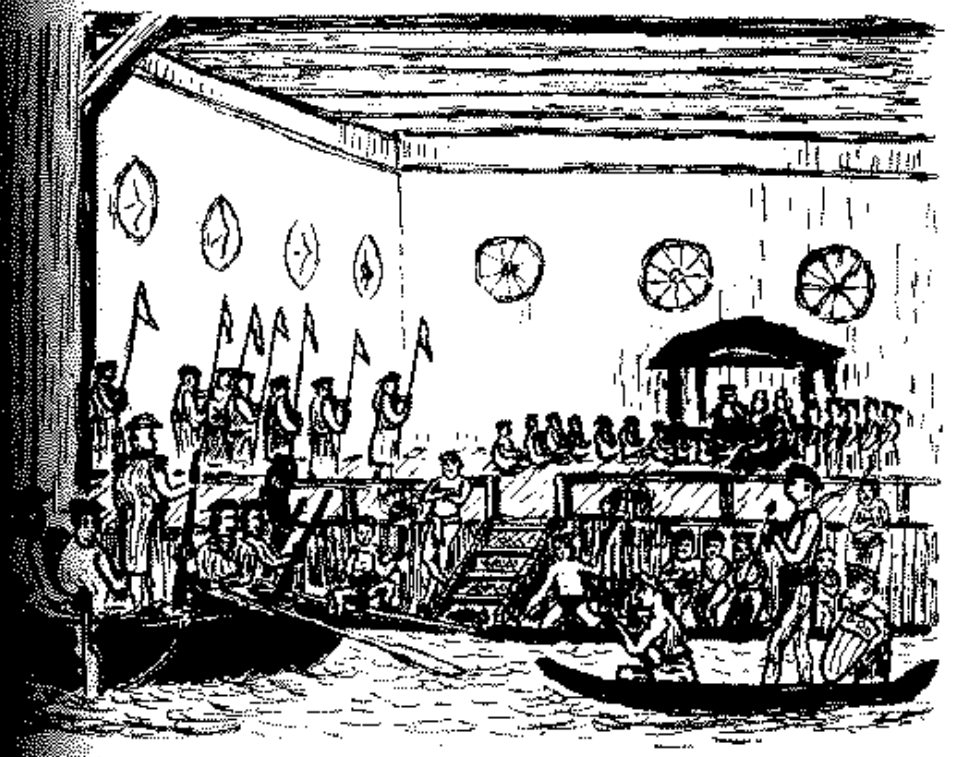
But the mere rumour of the approach of Captain Mundy sent the Sultan back to his bolt-hole in the jungle, and it was not till three weeks had passed that His Highness would consent to receive the British Captain. He sent a present of bullocks, and vegetables loaded in a barge. Captain Mundy however was cautious and would not receive any presents until after his audience with the Sultan and he tactfully refused all gifts, while expressing his gratification at receipt of the Sultan's letter accompanying them. He replied to this letter saying that he felt sure that troubles in Borneo were now at an end.

Next morning the pinnace, barge, cutter and gig manned with sailors left H.M.S. *Iris* and Captain Mundy followed in his galley. The sailors rowed seventeen miles upstream with a wind against them on a slight flood tide. It took three and a half hours. At half past eleven o'clock in blazing sunshine the ship's boats anchored in line opposite the Sultan's palace and the marines drew up on a terrace leading to the audience chamber. Sultan Omar Ali received Captain Mundy at the entrance to the audience

amber and the marines presented arms. At ce the Sultan's demeanour showed that he sented the landing of this naval party. He oked about him with surprise.

The numerous Pengirans who thronged the dience chamber treated the Sultan with marked spect, and supported him.

The Sultan offered his hand to the Captain and d him to a seat, but he still looked doubtfully the marines whose presence he disliked tensely. The conversation had to be inter- eted and Captain Mundy exercised patience. e knew how trying it is to the patience to listen r many hours to men whose language is not



At the Audience Chamber
(After Marryat)

understood, and whose every word must be translated by the interpreter, and he knew how much the people appreciated a friendly attitude.

Captain Mundy presented his naval officers to the Sultan and then asked for a private interview with the Sultan in a quiet room. The Sultan rose at once and led the Captain down a long corridor to an open chamber which overlooked Brunei River. He ordered a large wax taper to be lit and placed between them and explained that this taper was witness to the purity of his heart and to the oath which he was ready to swear in goodwill to "his sister the Queen of Europe", as he described Queen Victoria.

Captain Mundy did not mince matters and began to lecture the Sultan on his past misconduct. The Captain said that he noticed how the Sultan had built himself a new palace to replace the old palace which he, the Captain, had burned to the ground some years before, and he would find it much more agreeable to protect the new palace than to burn it down like the old one. The Sultan replied swearing by the Prophet, in whose honour he had just fasted for thirty days that his heart was in the right place. The Captain then took his leave. Although the cession was not discussed at this first interview, everyone knew that the visit was intended to lead to it. The Captain embarked in his galley at about one o'clock under another salute and got aboard H.M.S. *Iris* at five o'clock in the evening. He was satisfied with his visit.

Brunei River had been crowded with boats and erything had been done to give him a proper ception.

Next morning Captain Mundy put to sea and ood over towards Labuan. At ten o'clock a ge prahu came alongside and several Pengirans esented themselves in the Captain's cabin aring despatches from the Sultan to Admiral ochrane and James Brooke. For the Captain mself there was a complimentary letter and a old handled *kris*, which the Sultan hoped the aptain would keep as a memento of his visit. he Captain was diplomatic. He did not wish accept the gift, but neither did he wish to fuse a civil offer made just after an audience hich had passed off satisfactorily. So he quested the Pengirans to deposit the *kris* in a de cabin in a box where it would rest until the aptain returned to Brunei. Then if the Captain und that the Sultan was still sincere and was rved by good ministers, he would keep it as a esent to be highly prized. But if things turned t contrary to his hopes, the Captain would be bliged to return the *kris* to the Sultan. The ngirans declared themselves satisfied with this rangement and the deputation left the frigate.

H.M.S. *Iris* then sailed for Sarawak River to port to James Brooke, and sailed on toSingapore await final instructions for the annexation of abuan.

Captain Mundy had not to wait for long. is instructions reached him in November.

Admiral Cochrane was still in command in China seas, he knew Brunei and he wrote his instructions. H.M.S. *Wolf* was detailed to support *Iris* and the two ships would sail in consort.

Admirals are famous for the stately diction of their despatches and Sir Thomas Cochrane's choice of words could hardly be bettered.

Addressing Captain G Rodney Mundy, Esquire, Captain of H.M.S. *Iris*, the Admiral wrote:—

"Your first proceeding will be, on your arrival off the Borneo River, to wait upon the Sultan and acquaint His Highness that Her Majesty the Queen is now desirous of availing herself of the treaty entered into in November 1844, and that you have received instructions to carry Her Majesty's wishes into effect.

"The judgment and discretion you have already evinced since my departure from the coast of Borneo persuade me that in the relations which will hereafter take place between the squadron under your command and the Sultan and his ministers will be governed by the utmost circumspection, urbanity and forbearance, so that His Highness' misconduct and consequent humiliation shall only be brought to his recollection through the contrast offered in the present tranquillity and increase of dignity he enjoys by his friendly relations with Great Britain.

"Having made your preliminary arrangements with His Highness or his ministers, you will proceed to take formal possession of

Labuan, with the usual ceremonies observed in such occasions, and if you have the means of doing so at hand, you will erect in a conspicuous place a stone column stating the day, month, year and reign in which the possesion was made.

"You will be careful not to incur any expense upon the island without authority to do so."

These few sentences taken from the Admiral's instructions are delightful. The Sultan's misdeeds in the past may be forgiven but not forgotten. Present conduct of affairs must be in such contrast that the folly of the past will still be kept in mind. Captain Mundy is presumed to know the usual ceremony of annexing an island, and is forbidden to spend a penny in doing so,

The careful Captain studied his instructions. He also read a despatch from Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, sent to him for his guidance.

Captain Mundy in H.M.S. *Iris* lay at Singapore until H.M.S. *Wolf* arrived from China to support him. The two ships refitted at Singapore, and Lieutenant Colonel Butterworth, the Hon'ble Company's Governor of Singapore, sent on board the ships an ample supply of tents, awnings, tools and other gear for clearing the jungle and setting up the first camp in the new colony. Captain Mundy began to draft a short treaty which he proposed to submit to the Sultan on arrival at Brunei for signature. This document on completion was written out in beautiful English and

Malay lettering. Captain Mundy received from his friend Captain Hamilton, Secretary to the Admiralty in London, a letter of congratulations and good wishes, which greatly cheered him. Mrs Church, of Singapore, sent on board a final gift of flowers, plants and seeds for the new colony and H.M.S. *Iris* and H.M S. *Wolf* sailed from Singapore at daylight on 1st December 1846, with the good wishes of all. His first port of call would be Kuching, where he would seek the advice of James Brooke.

That the month of December is the most unseasonable time of the year for such an operation seems to have occurred to none. It is the wettest month of the year on most of the west coast and the north east monsoon blows strongly.

The warships had a boisterous passage. The *landas*, so familiar to sailors along our western coasts, begins about the third week in October and is blowing at full strength in December.

The warships ran into shelter in Sarawak River and dropped anchor. H.M.S. *Hazard* awaited them. Captain Mundy proceeded up-river to Kuching in his galley. The row of thirty five miles took his sailors five and a half hours and the Captain found James Brooke at the head of his table entertaining his Sarawak chiefs. That night the question of the treaty with the Sultan was looked into and James Brooke approved the draft which was to be presented to the Sultan, A doubtful point had occurred to Captain Mundy. He saw a difficulty in the way. Would the Sultan sign the treaty to

cede Labuan without being offered something in exchange? James Brooke's first view was that the Pengirans and ministers in Brunei would raise objections and would advise the Sultan not to sign the document unless money was paid to them. But he then went on to say that if Captain Mundy was resolute, the Sultan would affix his seal to the document. James Brooke could not be present. He was due to visit Singapore. In the event the Captain would visit Brunei supported only by H.M.S. *Wolf*.

Next morning Captain Mundy left the *Astana* at Kuching and took James Brooke with him in his galley down river. At the mouth of the river a heavy gale was blowing. James Brooke boarded H.M.S. *Hazard* for Singapore and Captain Mundy boarded H.M.S. *Iris* for Brunei. In doing so his galley was stove all to pieces by the storm. In spite of the bad weather *Iris* and *Wolf* got under weigh and proceeded to sea in the face of a strong northerly wind. The ships beat to windward in a heavy sea. *Iris* outsailed *Wolf* making ten knots against the head sea. For three days the ships battered against the squalls and at last anchored off Baram Point. It was then dusk. No time could be lost and at three o'clock in the morning Captain Mundy weighed anchor. The wind was still blowing strongly and rain fell heavily as the ships worked off shore under double-reefed top-sails. Daylight showed land to the eastward and at nine o'clock the weather cleared. The gallant captain was then standing on the heaving quarter-deck of his frigate.

Appreciative as always of the beauty of nature and of his country's destiny, he took up his pen.

"Suddenly we observed the summit of the great mountain of Kinabalu towering above the clouds, its fantastic and rugged peaks clearly pencilled on the blue sky beyond, the distance from the ship at the time being upwards of 120 miles."

At noon he observed Labuan.

"Ten days from this date Labuan will be British territory. I am proud to think that it will be my lot to hoist the British flag thereon, for who can predict the results which may arise from this insular possession, commanding as it does the whole north west coast of Borneo? If followed up, our influence will be firmly established in the eastern archipelago."

The sea-breeze from westward blew fresh and he brought H.M.S. *Iris* to anchor off Muara at sunset. He saw a large number of prahus running into Brunei river, but there was no sign of H.M.S. *Wolf*. Captain Mundy was much exercised in his mind about the attitude the Sultan was likely to adopt and the Captain decided to take a much more decisive line of action than the forbearance which Admiral Cochrane had directed in his despatch.

At daylight *Wolf* was not yet in sight, and Captain Mundy decided not to wait for her. He manned *Iris'* boats, put Lieutenant Heath in charge and gave written orders to him. He was to proceed at once and his written orders were to be translated to the chief Pengirans in

Brunei. These written orders gave an indication of the orders which the Captain himself had received from the Admiral, but there were variations. For instance the Captain now set forth the indignation felt by the British Government at the Sultan for having dared to fire at the Queen's flag and he declared that upon the behaviour of His Highness and his Pengirans in the coming interview depended whether peaceful relations would be renewed or not. This was threat rather than urbanity. The alternative to peaceful relations was force and the choice lay with the Sultan and his Pengirans.

James Brooke's advice had been to the effect that Captain Mundy must be resolute to obtain the Sultan's consent to the treaty. The Pengirans would expect payment of money in return for the cession, but the Captain had no authority to entertain any proposals of that kind. He had reasoned it out carefully and had his orders to take steps to obtain formal possession of Labuan. The threat contained in his written orders to Lieutenant Heath for the Pengirans to hear was designed to keep them in fear of another visit of Admiral Sir Thomas Cochrane and James Brooke, with the whole China Squadron to support them. That lay behind the threat and was intended to counter the opposition of the Pengirans who were ill-disposed to the cession. Amongst these Pengirans were some who still supported the pirates' cause and connived at the robbery of peaceful traders at sea, as Captain Mundy well knew.

Captain Mundy waited in H.M.S. *Iris* at the mouth of Brunei River all that day for the return of Lieutenant Heath and the boats. In the evening they returned to the ship. Lieutenant Heath reported that after translating his orders to the ministers, he had been summoned to the presence of the Sultan. The Sultan declared that he was ready to meet Captain Mundy. He had confidence and faith in the Captain and he would sign the treaty with good-will when laid before him. Would the Lieutenant please inform the Captain so.

This sounded well, but nevertheless Captain Mundy looked anxiously for *Wolf*. He felt the need for an imposing flotilla of boats and for a body of marines large enough to overawe the turbulent Pengirans.

At last *Wolf* arrived. She had been much delayed by bad weather and was in need of repair, but Captain Mundy decided that there was no time to be lost. Arrangements must be made for the visit to Brunei on the morrow. Captain Mundy sent Lieutenant Little in charge of the boats of both ships at daylight. Twenty marines went in the boats. Lieutenant Little had orders to moor his boats in line of battle opposite the Sultan's palace in Brunei and to await his Captain's arrival.

With the party went Lieutenant Heath who knew sufficient Malay to assist the qualified Malay writers and interpreters whose services had been borrowed from the Hon'ble Company at Singapore.

At noon after a long row up Brunei river Captain Mundy arrived in his galley. He reviewed the line of boats and the marines drawn up ashore with fixed bayonets. Pengirans Mumin, the chief minister, received him at the Palace steps and escorted him to the Sultan who waited at the gateway to the audience chamber. Sultan Omar Ali shook hands with him, offered the usual salutations and led him to a seat. The chamber was crowded with Pengirans, Rajahs and dependants, all well dressed and all armed with *kris*. Captain Mundy began business without delay and said that he had brought with him a treaty for His Highness' seal and signature. He hoped His Highness would approve of it. He asked that it be read aloud by the interpreter. This was done.

It was short and contained three points:—

"Peace, friendship and good understanding shall subsist for ever between Her Majesty the Queen and His Highness the Sultan and their respective heirs and successors:

"His Highness the Sultan hereby cedes in full sovereignty and property to Her Majesty the Queen, her heirs and successors, for ever, the island of Labuan and its islets adjacent:

"The Government of Her Majesty the Queen hereby engages in consideration of the cession above specified to use its best endeavours to suppress piracy and to protect lawful commerce, and the Sultan of Brunei and his ministers promise to afford every assistance to the British authorities."

The day was December, 18th, 1846.

The first and second paragraphs gave satisfaction, but the third led to discussion. The ministers would not agree that the consideration offered by the British Government was sufficient. Here at last was a definite promise on the British side. The British undertook to suppress piracy and protect commerce, which was a formidable task even with the help of Brunei ministers. It was not enough, said the ministers. In their hearts they were opposed to suppression of piracy because it would affect their pockets. They wanted payment of money for the cession of the island.

For an hour the discussion went on. Captain Mundy did not speak, until at last the interpreter said to him that the nobles wanted money in return for the island. Then he spoke.

"I have no instructions," replied Captain Mundy, "to entertain such a proposal."

The Sultan turned to him.

"This day", said the Sultan, "is Friday, a day kept holy to the Prophet. I cannot sign any paper this day."

"But no objection," replied the Captain, "was made to Lieutenant Heath when I first proposed Friday."

"The former treaty", said the Sultan, "was not similar to this and I require money in exchange for the island."

Captain Mundy hinted that he had the support of high and powerful officials. The threat of the presence of James Brooke and the Admiral of the

hina squadron was implied:

"When Your Highness fired at the British g," said the Captain, "you broke the former eaty and peace has not since been made. The dmiral and James Brooke expect you to sign is paper as a proof of the sincerity of your romises made to me when I last visited Your ighness."

The discussion amongst the ministers and the engirans continued and seemed interminable. he Captain began to be impatient. He spoke out.

"*Buboh chop, buboh chop*" he exclaimed to the ultan. He knew very little Malay, but his eaning was understood. He wished the Sultan o set his seal to the document without further elay. The Captain's eye had marked the inevitble turn of the tide. The tide was ebbing. erhaps the Sultan, of a sea-faring race, had oted it too.

The Sultan rose immediately.

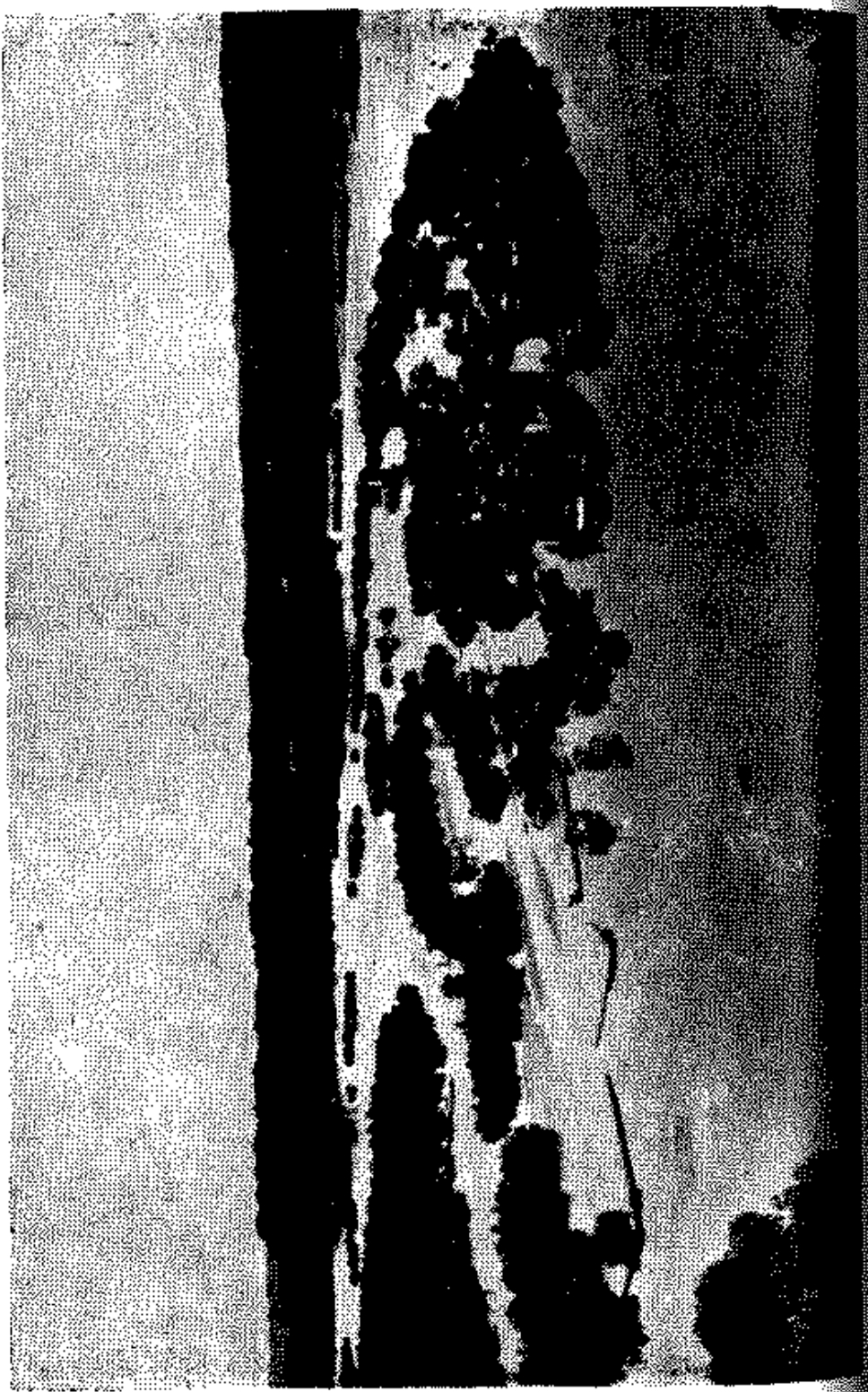
"I promised and I will perform."

He left the audience chamber accompanied by few of the Pengirans. Time passed. The aptain sat in silence, a pattern of patience.

After twenty minutes the Captain spoke to engiran Mumin.

"The tide has turned," he said. "Time resses. Call His Highness the Sultan."

Shortly afterwards the Sultan returned to the udience chamber bearing the royal seal with ride for indeed it was a fine piece of workmanhip. A train of attendants accompanied him, arrying wax tapers. The Sultan led the way



The royal seal was held over the candle, blackened with soot, and then impressed below the Malay version of the treaty. Captain Mundy added his own seal and signature to the English version.

Thus was Labuan ceded.

The Pengirans watched in sullen silence. Looks of defiance marked their features, but the ships boats in line of battle and the marines with their fixed bayonets discouraged any act of violence. They could only protest. Captain Mundy wrote subsequently in his diary that he looked each of these Pengirans in turn one by one steadily in the face. He has done them full justice in saying that each one of them returned his look with a cool and haughty gaze. The Captain realised that their hatred was implacable and only when the flag had been hoisted on Labuan within forty miles of the city of Brunei would their cruel and despotic rule come to an end.

The attitude of the people was quite different, and they gave the sailors a hearty send-off.

When Captain Mundy rose to take his leave, the Sultan asked for five minutes' talk in private with him.

"Will the Queen interfere with my government on the mainland?" he asked. "I have full confidence in you, Captain, because you have always performed your promises."

"We will not interfere with Your Highness' government," replied the Captain, "but our ships will protect your coast from the Illanun pirates."

The Captain then proposed that on his next visit to Brunei, the Sultan should pay a state visit to the war ships. He would be received with royal honours and thus prove to his enemies that he was in alliance with the British nation.

It was time to go and last farewells were exchanged. His Highness begged to be excused from crossing Brunei Bay and from attending the ceremony of annexation, because he was always sick at sea.

Captain Mundy with a nice appreciation of the Sultan's need to save face when ceding his island replied wisely and courteously, as our naval commanders know so well how to do when occasion demands. He regretted that he had no suitable ship for the Sultan's passage. The only steamship under his command had been wrecked on her voyage to Borneo. No other steamship was at his disposal and he could not hear of the Sultan crossing Brunei Bay in an open barge.

Captain Mundy then presented a handsome silver mounted telescope to the Sultan and bade good-bye to the Pengirans.

Outside, the *nakhoda*, merchants and people were hailing the news with joy. They looked upon the cession of Labuan and the protection of warships as the dawn of a better day. Hundreds of prahu circled about the ships' boats, cheering the sailors and offering provisions.

The Captain came out from the audience chamber and stepped into his gig, whilst the

Brunei batteries saluted with fifteen guns, and drums and cymbals beat lustily.

The cession was popular because the seamen, traders and shopkeepers of Brunei looked forward to the benefits of trade in which all could share rather than the ill-gotten gains of piracy shared by a few.

With the treaty of cession in his pocket, Captain Mundy went down river to give effect to it.

To the Captain the result of the visit seemed good, and before closing his diary on board *Iris* he filled a page of it with justification of his action and hopes for the future.

The life of Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin II, was now nearing its close. He had lived a stormy life and had fought to win his throne. His predecessor was his own half-brother who was regarded as a usurper and was defeated in civil war. He was Sultan Mohamed Alam. He met his death by strangulation in Pulau Chermin, his family fled and Sultan Omar Ali came to the throne in his stead about 1828, being about thirty years of age.

Sultan Omar Ali was a dark complexioned man with rather plain features. On his right hand was a malformation resembling a second thumb, which stood out at right-angles to his true thumb.

According to Brunei law this should have disqualified him for the throne, because as Hugh

Low has written, no man imbecile in mind or deformed in person can rise to the position of Sultan, whatever title his birth may have given him. He was about five feet five inches tall, thin and small of limb. He dressed well and his manner and deportment were good. His ministers never failed to treat him with marked respect. He had an evil disposition, and his weak mind approached idiocy. Worthless advisers held sway over him, the worst being Pengiran Usup.

Next morning H.M.S. *Iris* got under weigh and crossed over to Labuan, anchoring in Victoria Harbour at ten o'clock in seven fathoms, two cables length from the beach H.M.S. *Wolf* still under repair at the mouth of Brunei River would follow next day. Captain Mundy named the promontory round which he passed Hamilton Point, after his old friend at the Admiralty in London, because he could not learn any native name for it. The name has not lasted and the point is called Kiamsam Point in the maps. The point near which he anchored is called Ramsay Point.

Captain Mundy and Lieutenant Heath landed immediately, fixed on a spot for the flagstaff and tents, and then walked round to the inner harbour, where they found some trading prahus which had crossed over from Benoni on the mainland. The Captain was pleased with the

ne. It was flat, clear of jungle and covered with arse grass though swampy in places.

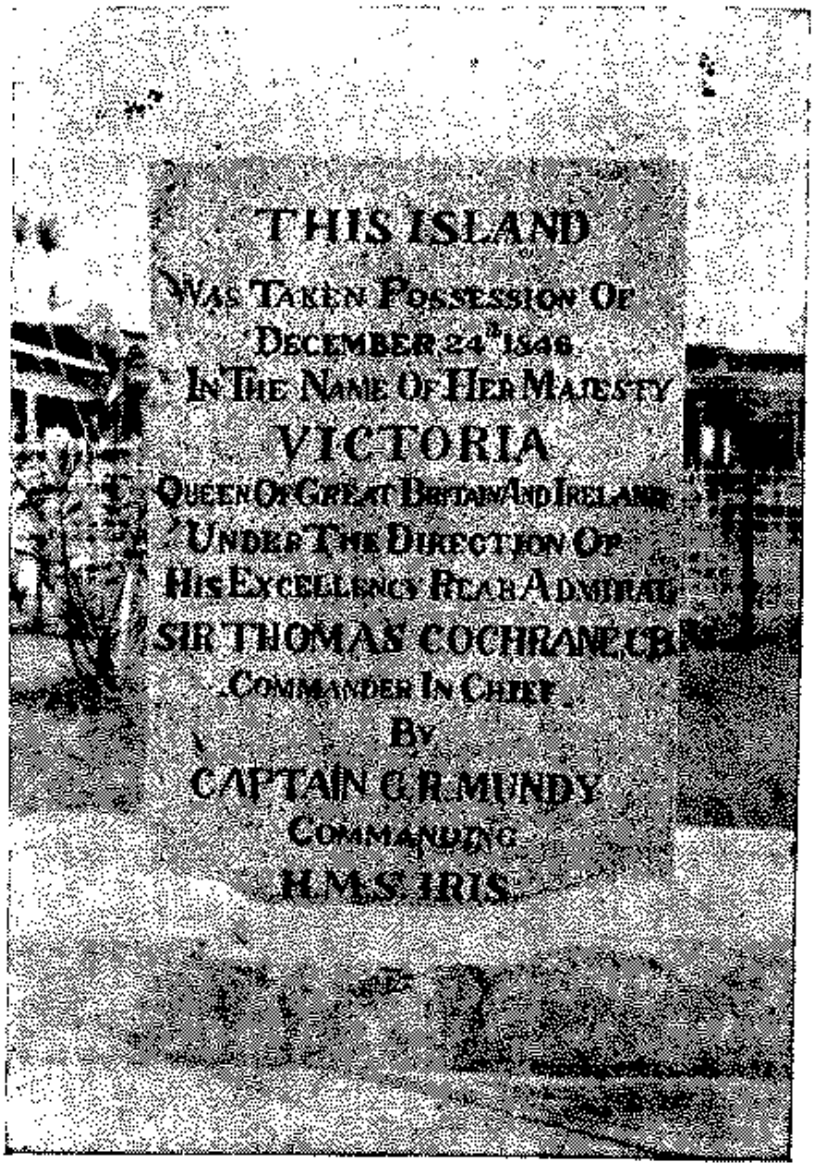
Visitors who walk along Labuan beach can see e place. The site of the flagstaff was about alf a mile from Ramsay Point towards the inner arbour. Erosion has occurred as the stone eacon at Ramsay Point shows, the swamp has een drained and casuarina trees have replaced he jungle. The plain is much clearer and more pen than it was.

In the afternoon a working party landed. ents were pitched and clearing begun. The agstaff was beached and wells were dug. Good ater was found three or four feet deep below he sand near the sea shore.

H.M.S. *Wolf* arrived next day and Commander ordon helped to supervise the working parties. he flagstaff was stepped twenty yards from the hore. Guns were landed and placed in battery. engiran Mumin, chief minister of Brunei, arrived ith about eighty followers, was honoured with salute of thirteen guns and a reception in the Captain's cabin on board H. M. S. *Iris*. When eaving the deck, Pengiran Mumin unbuckled rom his waist a handsome *kris* with an ivory hilt nd presented it to the Captain. There was no ign of recrimination at any time.

December 24th was a gala day. Early in the morning a granite slab, bearing an inscription,

was erected close to the flagstaff:



Stone of Annexation

The granite slab came from Hong Kong and was inscribed by sailors on board ship. After over a hundred years, the lettering is firm and clear.

Naval etiquette was rigid and perhaps for the
st time in his life Pengiran Mumin came under
scipline. He learned the importance of time.
ptain Mundy and Pengiran Mumin must each
ve his own deck at the same moment of time.
aval etiquette demanded this and a sailor was
nt on board the Pengiran's prahu to see that
kept to the program. One hundred and eighty
ilors and marines landed first and at two
clock in blazing heat Captain Mundy and
mmander Gordon each left his ship, saw with
lief that Pengiran Mumin was up to time and
were rowed ashore. The Captain and
mmander reached the beach first, landed and
ceived Pengiran Mumin without causing him
wait. He was escorted by a large retinue of
bles and followed Captain Mundy between files
marines to an elevated platform erected near
flagstaff.

Umbrellas were then opened. Pengiran Mumin's
mbrella consisted of orange damask with long
ndant fringes, but this color did not eclipse the
ptain's. Captain Mundy unfurled his own
mbrella. It was a thing of crimson silk. It
s originally intended as a present to a king of
Congo in Africa, but when Captain Mundy
the course of the manifold duties which fall to
naval officer had visited the king, the king
formed the Captain in plain language that it
the king's purpose to carry on the slave trade
heretofore and so break his engagement with
Queen of England. So the Captain had no
for the umbrella in Africa, but now in Labuan

he hoisted it and stood beneath its shade with the utmost satisfaction.

Speechmaking began. The Captain and Pengiran Mumin mounted a rostrum, while lesser people took up their positions standing on the gravel below. There were several hundreds of men present from the war ships and native boats.

The Captain spoke in English and Lieutenant Heath interpreted. The Captain as usual was downright and threatening.

"I make known to all present," he said, "that on this day I take possession of the island of Labuan and of the small islands around it in the name of Her Majesty the Queen of England. We now therefore stand on British territory.

"The quiet and good people of every nation will be protected in their lawful commerce by the British men-of-war, and pirates both by sea and land will be utterly destroyed and their towns burned to the ground.

"The Queen of England and the Sultan of Brunei henceforth are friends. The British Admiral will therefore destroy all pirate vessels that make war against the Sultan or molest the coast."

This speech, wrote the Captain in his memoirs, was well received. He then ordered Midshipman Henry Morgan to hoist the Union Jack and the British ensigns, red, white, and blue were run up at the tents. The ships and batteries ashore fired a royal salute and the marines and sailors kept up a roll of musketry.

The ceremony closed with three hearty cheers for "Old England". "Brevity", the Captain wrote, "is the life of this sort of ceremony and the whole affair was over in ten minutes."

Refreshments were spread on a rustic table with forty seats near the shore for Pengiran Mumin and his nobles, and the Captain noted that they all played upon the beer handsomely, and preferred it to champagne or pure water. At sunset the Captain and Commander strolled along the deserted beach and watched the flags lowered together. Then the Captain returned on board H.M.S. *Iris* to write up his diary; "right glad to have rest for mind and body for verily this sort of duty in such a climate was not accomplished without fatigue."

Christmas Day was on the morrow. A hundred years ago there were no special Christmas ceremonies as in the present time. It was usual for all the officers to dine with the Captain, and Commander Gordon of *Wolf* joined the party on board *Iris*.

During the last few days of the year working parties from the ships continued to clear the ground and began the construction of a pier and a guard house. Fresh water was close at hand and the casuarina trees gave some shade. But sickness soon attacked the men. Several cases of fever and dysentery were reported and Commander Gordon fell ill. He slowly weakened and on January 6th 1847 he died on board his ship. Headhunters did not cross over from the mainland to the island to open graves and steal

heads until later, and the burial of Commander Gordon ashore took place in the normal way. Captain Mundy, who had seen much of death and suffering in his life, went ashore immediately to fix upon a spot for the grave. He selected a secluded nook in the centre of a fine group of lofty trees with a running stream winding between them. At five o'clock in the evening the funeral party landed and reading the burial service himself he consigned the body of his brother officer to the grave. Some officers of *Wolf* remained to plant a few shrubs round the spot. A memorial stone was erected and still stands :—

Sacred to the memory of
James A. Gordon Esquire
Commander of H.M.S. *Wolf*
Son of Rear Admiral Sir James A. Gordon, K.C.B.
who departed this life
at Labuan, 6th January 1847
aged 28 years

A few months later another stone was erected— to the memory of a Colour Sergeant of the Royal Marines. It still stands :—

Sacred to the memory of
Colour Sergeant Adam C. Sutherland of the Royal Marines,
late of Her Majesty's Brig Columbine,
who fell mortally wounded in the noble
discharge of his duty in an attack on Balanini
pirates in the cutter of this vessel
on 30th May 1847

Few places are more sad then these out of the way graveyards where so many of our own people have been laid to rest.

H.M.S. *Iris* had fulfilled her mission and was wanted for other duty. Lieutenant Heath was promoted to be commander of *Wolf* and left in charge of the island.

Captain Mundy aboard *Iris* sailed on January 12th and saw Labuan fade over the stern of his ship. With all sail and a strong north-east moonson she left the Borneo coast rapidly behind. At Singapore a week later the Captain received an official letter approving of the articles of the treaty which he had drafted for the annexation.

His forbiddance of anyone to settle on the island until the wishes and views of the British Government had been ascertained was also approved.

The reason for this forbiddance was that in Hong Kong early settlers had constructed houses and acquired a title for land on the very edge of the sea, shutting out the view and approach to the harbour. In Singapore, on the other hand, an open space or quay had been retained, and Labuan shold follow the example of Singapore. Admiral Sir Thomas Cochrane emphatically expressed his own views about this and if any parties fixed themselves on the island, as he put it, his Captains would have no hesitation in pulling down their erections and expelling them from the island.

So traders were made to feel that they were not so welcome after all.

James Brooke sent a final letter of friendship to Captain Mundy as he lay at Singapore and

later met him there to bid good-bye. But the Captain had to face another loss.

Airey, the master of *Iris* died after sickness. He too had fallen a victim of the climate of Labuan and to exposure there in exploring for coal and water, but even so Captain Mundy was not prepared to say that the coast of Borneo was in itself unhealthy. His men should change their clothes when wet and not stand in the sun unnecessarily.

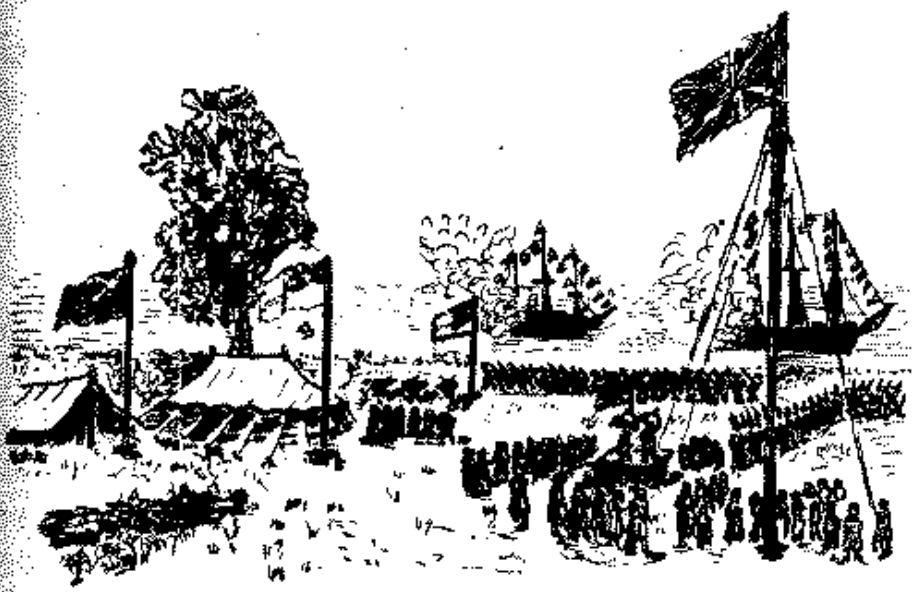
Captain Mundy liked this part of the world and when at Singapore he received orders to sail immediately to Spithead, he wrote that the order was doubtless received by the majority on board with the greatest delight, but for himself he had become so interested in the affairs of Borneo, and looked forward so much to conveying James Brooke back to Sarawak and to visiting Labuan again, that the news was the most unwelcome that could have reached him.

So in February 1847, Captain Mundy reported *Iris* ready for sea and in due course sailed for England round Cape of Good Hope. For the rest of his life he retained an affection for the coast of Borneo which he had served so well, and so courageously.

The scene of the annexation of Labuan is commemorated in a picture entitled "Ceremony of Hoisting the British Flag on the Island of Labuan". Lieutenant L. G. Heath R.N. who was present, and later took over command of H.M.S. *Wolf*, drew a sketch of the scene. Mr J. W. Giles, an artist, worked on this sketch and

The picture is by his hand, *circa* 1847. The picture hangs in the Parker Gallery, 2 Albemarle Street, London, W. 1.

A colourful print of this picture hangs in the Information Office at Jesselton.



Hoisting the flag
after Heath

CHAPTER 4

THE FIRST GOVERNOR

James Brooke had always pressed for the cession of Labuan, was fully acquainted with the politics of Borneo and had strengthened his position in Sarawak. No fitter appointment as the first Governor of the new Colony could be made.

James Brooke by that time had become famous and during his visit to England in 1847 he received high honours. The Corporation of London conferred on him the freedom of the city and he visited Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle for a few days. A conversation between them is recorded.

The Queen asked James Brooke how was it that he found it so easy to manage so many thousands people in Borneo. James Brooke replied "I find it easier to govern ten of thousands of Malays and Dyaks than to manage a dozen of your Majesty's subjects."

Upon which the Queen laughed and said, "I can easily imagine that ".

The British Government decided that James Brooke was to go out as Governor of Labuan, with William Napier as Lieut-Governor, and Captain Hon. Henry Keppel R.N. was appointed to command H.M.S. *Maeander*, 44 guns, then at Chatham, and sail with them as passengers.

Captain Keppel was acquainted with Borneo and had been engaged in attacks on pirates in 1843. He was more likely to be of assistance in forming the new settlement than a stranger could be.

William Napier had long resided in Singapore as a Proctor, with rights to interfere in certain matters on behalf of the Crown, was well acquainted with the intricacies of the treaties with the Netherlands Government respecting the East Indies and understood the political situation.

A voyage to the East Indies in those days was a serious undertaking. The Suez Canal had not yet been cut and *Maeander* sailed by way of Cape Horn.

The confusion on board an East Indiaman, fitted for passengers, was bad enough, but in a man-of-war like H.M.S. *Maeander* arrangements for passengers led to much worse discomfort for all on board. The main-deck guns as far forward as the mainmast were dismantled, the ports were fitted as windows, and the deck divided into cabins. In the man-of-war every inch of space had already been taken up. The holds were filled with provisions necessary for a large body of men, and the extra demand by passengers for stowage was not fairly to be had. The lower deck was crammed up to the beams with luggage, and the men were turned out of their proper berths, causing a great discomfort to them all.

The Governor's party embarked on 24th January 1847 at Spithead. Captain Keppel, R.N. H.M.S. *Maeander* sailed on 1st February and at once met bad weather in the Channel. She

sought shelter in Plymouth Sound and again in Cork Harbour from the worst of it but the passengers suffered considerably, as Captain Keppel tersely put it. On 26th February they were in Madeira and on 28th March in Rio Janeiro. They rounded Cape Horn and on 13th May they were off Java. On 20th May they reached Singapore.

James Brooke was received in the East Indian Company's settlement with the honours due to one of H.M's. Colonial Governors and next morning preparations to collect supplies for the new colony began. An office was opened in Singapore and contracts were made first of all for frame works of temporary buildings to be erected in Labuan.

On 9th June, H.C.S. *Phlegethon* steamed out of Singapore with Civil Engineer, John Scott, and Harbour Master Hosken on board as pioneers of the new settlement at Labuan.

On 7th August news was received in Singapore that the Queen has been pleased to confer the Order of the Bath on James Brooke.

William Napier, Lieut-Governor designate, was directed to invest Sir James accordingly.

Colonel Butterworth, the energetic and capable Governor of Singapore, had no authority to perform a ceremony of this kind, because he was a servant of the Hon'ble Company and not of the Crown. The Queen's Warrant was supported by instructions from Prince Albert, the Queen's Consort, to omit nothing from the ceremony

that might evince the esteem entertained by the Queen for James Brooke.

An elaborate ceremony was arranged for 22nd August in the Public Rooms at the foot of Fort Canning in Singapore.

William Napier gave a ball in the evening after the ceremony.

Buckley's Anecdotal History of Singapore records that this was an occasion long remembered by the community of Singapore. Colonel Butterworth, the Governor, also had cause to remember it because he lost his gold watch, and Mrs. Butterworth lost her jewellery which was stolen the same night.

William Napier had started the *Singapore Free Press* and was known as Royal Billy. He had the strut of a tragedy tyrant on the stage and was extremely popular.

Unfortunately by some mischance the representatives of the Queen omitted to invite the Editor of a Singapore Newspaper to the ceremony and it is said that the oversight embittered him and led to the publication of many articles disparaging the new Colony.

The Editor's pen was sharp in rebuke on every possible occasion when Labuan's affairs came under his notice.

At last on 29th August, H.M.S. *Maeander* left Singapore for Borneo with Sir James Brooke, K.C.B. on board. Lieut-Governor William Napier was to follow on H.C.S *Phlegethon's* next voyage.

H.M.S. *Maeander* called first at Kuching and a month later on 29th September 1847, she landed Sir James Brooke at Victoria, wearing uniform as the first Governor of Labuan.

Other officials who arrived with Sir James were Hugh Low to be Government Secretary and Spencer St John to be Private Secretary to the Governor. The new Governor found that John Scott, the Surveyor and Engineer, had been busy in the past year.

Coal had been discovered and was already being rudely worked by William Miles.

Temporary residences erected near the port consisted of small square cottages on posts about four feet from the ground. The walls and partitions were of matting and the roofs of atap. They did not look inviting. The flat selected for the settlement was below the level of the sea and protected by a self-formed sand-band. It had a swampy, unhealthy look. The row of thatched house stood on the sandy shore between the sea and the swamps behind. The air buzzed with millions of mosquitoes.

Sandy flats in front may have appeared attractive, but the swamps of black mud behind abounded with mosquitoes, and crabs breeding in thousands ruined any paths built across them.

Captain Keppel recorded his opinion of the new settlement and said that it consisted of the most miserable looking huts on the most unhealthy spot on the island. The flat on which they were built was below sea level and could

ot be seen from the deck of his ship because of he sand-bank which had silted up at the sea-edge.

Captain Keppel wrote that to avoid mischief ncidental to crude and hasty methods of coloni- tion, Captain Mundy, at the time of annexation, ad been directed to raise no fortifications, form o establishments on the island and allow no ettlers. Labuan was to be a naval station for he time and no more.

The sickness, he said, which prevailed amongst he sailors was ascribed to their imprudent ndulgence in wild fruit, to over-exertion, and to needless exposure. He mentioned jungle fever. The main cause of the sickness was too obvious to be mistaken. The ceremony of hoisting the flag had been performed in a large space, cleared of jungle and expressly levelled for the purpose. The officers should have known of the infallible consequences of such action.

Deadly miasmata would continue to hang for a long time over newly-made surfaces of earth, and malignant fevers would surely await men who were rash enough to take up their abode on such spots before sufficiently exposed to the sun.

Captain Keppel thought that in spite of unfortunate incidents, the island would be healthy. Probably there was no spot within the tropics where life was exposed to fewer risks from natural causes than Labuan. The soil is light and porous. The island is exposed to prevailing winds which sweep perpetually up and down these seas. For nine months of the year there is

abundant water, and the island was no worse off than was Singapore at that tims.

The site had been badly chosen and could not fail to be fever stricken. John Scott was not to blame, because he was unacquainted with the tropics and had acted under orders.

A Beach Scene

What is now called Plain Road was the site of the early bungalows, and the settlement lay on the town side of Ramsay Point. Commander Gordon's grave marked the limit of the settlement at the far end.

A better site for the houses was the ridge of hills where Hugh Low built permanent residencise later. However it was not for pioneers to

foresee difficulties, and the first Governor landed with due ceremony.

Sir James was duly sworn in, and thus began the Government of Labuan. On assuming office Sir James proclaimed that the island had now been formally taken over as a British possession that it would be open to settlers from 1st August 1848 and that it would be a free port.

All provisions were extremely expensive and there were few labourers. A few slaves belonging to some Malay Chiefs on the main-land had been lent, but the Chiefs could recall their slaves at any moment. A few Indians and Chinese had come over from Singapore, and earned high wages, but drink was very prevalent and little work was done.

Within a month of their arrival, the Governor and his officials were beset with illness and other difficulties.

Here is what Spencer St John wrote in October 1847;—

> The weather was very impropitious. The south-west monsoon blew with all its force. The sea rose to an unprecedented height and swept over the beach, filling the lower parts of the houses with water and damaging the provisions stored there.
>
> The rain fell in such quantities as to turn the swamp into a huge pool of fetid water and the consequences were obvious.
>
> The Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Doctor, Mr and Mrs Low, Captain Hoskins, Mr Grant, Captain Brooke and the marines

were all down with fever at the same time. The only civilians to escape were Mr Scott and myself.

I turned hospital nurse and for a fortnight at a time slept on a mat beside one patient or another.

The water rushing under our houses and through the store rooms alarmed the rats, and dozens of them invaded our bedrooms. So bold were they that while watching by the side of my patients, I could prod with my sword the boldest that ran near.

Higher ground had been selected for the barracks, and when ready, they would be occupied by a detachment of Madras Native troops from the Straits Settlements. Pending their arrival, H.M.S. *Maeander* landed a party of Marines to do duty on shore and then sailed for Singapore. On this short passage from Labuan to Singapore symptoms of malarial fever began to show on board H.M.S. *Maeander* among those Marines who had previously done duty on shore at Labuan before the ship sailed. Two died on board during the voyage and anxiety was felt about those who had been left behind on shore.

The Admiral at Singapore acted promptly. He despatched H.C.S. *Auckland* to Labuan for further news. She returned with news of progress and of the sickly state of all the men located on the flat at Labuan. The Admiral then decided that H.M.S. *Maeander* should embark as reinforcement a company of 21st Native Infantry and sail for Labuan at once.

On arrival at Labuan, Captain Keppel almost
eaded enquiring into the state of the Marines
t there, He found the whole Colony sick.
me of the marines had died. The Governor,
r James Brooke, was in the worst condition.
e had been delirious and lay apparently with
t little hope for recovery. The medical officer,
r. Treacher, in whom the Governor had every
nfidence was nearly as bad as himself.

Captain Keppel decided that steps should be
ken immediately to save the Governor's life.
laking his way into the sick room, he asked Sir
mes to prepare for removal on the morrow
ving a choice of passage either aboard H.C.S.
uckland a steamer or H.M.S. *Maeander* a sailing
ip. Sir James having a particular dislike to
e motion of a steamer, selected H.M.S. *Maeander*
spite of the wretched accommodation. The
aptain saw that no time was to be lost. Feeling
etter next morning, Sir James signed a few
apers, but he fainted twice during the day, and
hen the Captain came ashore just before sunset,
ith a boat's crew to convey him aboard, he was
exhausted and so much weakened that the
urgeon declared that it would be dangerous to
ove him. Nothing could be done except leave
im to "imbibe for another night the pestilential
ir of the Labuan plain". The following morn-
ng, Sir James felt better and his A.D.C. sent a
ote to the warships to say that Sir James would
mbark that evening. At five o'clock he was
eceived on board, supported to his cabin, and to
efresh him with sea air, the man-of-war put to

sea immediately and anchored off Bethune Head at seven o'clock in the evening. The Governor, who had duties to perform elsewhere as Consul General, was only just able to tell the Captain in which direction he wished to sail. Captain Keppel proceeded, keeping the ship under easy sail during the day and anchoring at sundown to give the Governor the benefit of undisturbed rest at night. There were other invalids aboard including the Governor's nephew and A.D.C. Captain Brooke, whose attack of fever was just coming on. Dr. Treacher was a mere shadow of his former self and both Charles Grant and Spencer St John were ill.

H.M.S *Maeander* sailed northwards coasting past Pulau Tiga to Kimanis Bay, where she anchored. The sick were laid in cots suspended on both sides of the maindeck. They were still too sick to enjoy the sight of Mount Kinabalu when sailing northward again past Kudat to enter Marudu Bay There one of the crew died of fever contracted in Labuan and was buried at sea and another died before they left Marudu Bay Only after the ship reached Sulu in the southern Philippines did the Governor and his party recover their health.

H.M.S. *Maeander* returned from Sulu with the Governor and his party restored to good health and landed them at Victoria. Much had been done during their short voyage.

The selection of the site for the town at Labuan had been severely criticised. Several considerations had appeared at first to recommend it, and

the objections, it was hoped, could be overcome in time. The site of Victoria had been chosen chiefly because all the naval officers who had visited the island, considered that anchorage to be the best harbour for shipping.

Some people thought that malarial fever came from the fresh water swamp lying behind the plain and that the swamp could be thoroughly drained. Others expressed doubt and thought that the sickness came from the coral reefs which abounded in the harbour.

The site of the settlement had been shifted from the swampy plain back a short way to firmer ground, and the plain had been drained, so that five years later in 1852 Captain Keppel could record that he had not heard lately any complaints of unhealthiness beyond those common to most tropical climates.

More comfortable houses had been erected on the higher ground and a good road had been built to the buildings out on the plain which were now only used as offices, The Indian troops were comfortable and contented, and the Colonial Secretary, Hugh Low, whom they had left in an apparently dying condition, had so far recovered as to take an interest in his garden.

The garrison consisted of a battalion of Indian infantry and a battery of artillery under British Officers. It was strong enough to drive off any marauders from the mainland opposite and to protect the island against a sudden raid by pirates from further east. The disaster at Balembangan

Island in 1775 was an example of what might happen again, if the garrison was too weak.

At Balembangan Island in 1775 there had been a trading station belonging to the East India Company. Pirates from the southern Philippine Islands took advantage of the sickness of the Indian troops and the absence of the port guard-ships. They rushed the defences of Balembangan from the rear, overwhelmed the Indian garrison and turned the guns on the Bugis troops, recruited in the Celebes Islands. The booty which the pirates captured at Balembangan was immense, amounting to one million Spanish dollars. The few European officials of the East India Company escaped making their way across Balembangan and taking boats on the west side. They reached Labuan, a bit of history in the memory of Sultan Omar Ali when he ceded Labuan.

The garrison of Labuan had always to be on the watch against a repetition of that earlier disaster at Balembangan. History however records no attack on Labuan.

Balembangan lay very close to the pirates' strongholds in Marudu Bay and Tungku, while Labuan lay much further away and was less exposed to attack.

The Governor and his staff had much to do.

A modern system of land tenure was instituted in Labuan and was the first of its kind in the world. Later the system received the generally accepted name of Torrens System. According to "The Australian Land Titles (Torrens) System

Kear, Labuan land tenure is the earliest stance of land registration. It was begun in 849 by the Labuan Ordinance 7 of 1849. Leases land were issued by the Government for 999 ars or lesser periods and rents were payable to e Government. In some cases permission was lowed to holders of the land to redeem the nual rent by payment of a lump sum, The land of Daat is an example of this. It is now eehold.

Communication with the colliery on the north the island could still be had by water only. he coal seam had been let out to an adventurer med William Miles (once Lloyd) who managed enrich himself by picking the surface of the m close to the water's edge and selling it for nkers of steamers at £1 a ton.

He was the first adventurer to start at Labuan ter its annexation. He worked the coal under ntract for the Admiralty from April 1847 to ly 1849 when the Eastern Archipelago Comny took possession of the mine. During the st fifteen months of that period, he lived with Malay miners at the mine His wife and ildren lived at Victoria about 10 miles distant d often he did not meet them for two or three eks and once not for two months. He spoke ll of the Malays.

Revenue was farmed. William Miles at one ne kept the spirit farm. He paid a lump sum wn to the Government for the right to import d sell liquor.

On 23 July 1848, H M.S. *Maeander* anchored off Coal Point for a cargo of coal. Coal had become so scarce at Singapore that the Naval Commander-in-Chief had sent ships to borrow coal from the Dutch Government at Batavia. All the surface of the coal seams at Labuan had been picked off by the contractor and his miners were then working about three hundred yards from water's edge. Labour was cheap, but the contract price had been raised. The output was then about ten tons a day. H.M.S. *Maeander's* crew, by working in the cool of the morning and evening filled her after-hold with 150 tons and the dirty job took some days.

The Governor gave dinner parties for the entertainment of visitors. On one occasion Admiral Sir Francis Collier, who had come on board H.C.S. *Auckland* told this story about himself at a Labuan dinner table.

In England he had been summoned before a bench of magistrates and having uttered a naval oath, the Chairman of the bench fined him five shillings for contempt of Court. The Admiral glared at all three magistrates on the bench, drew a gold sovereign from his pocket, threw it on the table and said,

"Damn your eyes all round and that will just make up the pound."

Admiral Sir Francis Collier was horrified at the state of affairs in Labuan. He took the worst cases on board H.C.S. *Auckland* and cleared for Singapore. He took a violent dislike to the little colony and ever after tried to run it down.

Between their bouts of sickness the officials made visits across Brunei Bay. Often the gales drove waves ashore across the beach into the town and filled the lower parts of the shop houses with sea water, damaging the stock of provisions. Rain turned the swampy site into a huge pool of foetid water and the consequences were disastrous. The Governor, the Lieutenant Governor and nearly all the officials fell sick again with fever, although housed on higher ground.

Sir James was often away in Brunei, Sarawak, Sulu, Singapore and even Siam and social life in Labuan was not happy in his absence. It seems to be the destiny of small communities to quarrel. The Governor felt these differences much. Many of the officials were his personal friends, and had he only to deal with men, he could have reconciled the differences, but the ladies were found to be too much even for his conciliatory disposition.

"Discord in Labuan," wrote Spencer St John, "reigned supreme."

It would have been hard to find any colony of the size more embroiled than Labuan. Bad feeling had been left over from the days of malarial fever. William Napier, the Lieutenant Governor, was at loggerheads with Hugh Low, his son-in-law, and there were countless other frictions.

James Motley, the new colliery contractor, quarrelled with both Napier and Low, and also with the naval men. He could not mine enough coal. One of his grievances was that the

Government owed him more than £3000 for coal already delivered and he repeated the earlier complaint that William Miles had taken away all the top stuff before his arrival.

On one of Sir James' visits to Brunei, he did all he could to persuade some of the wealthy Chinese traders and Brunei people to come over to Labuan, but he failed, because they knew that though he was Governor of the island, he seldom resided there. Only a prolonged residence of Sir James in the Colony would have attracted the population to come.

In time the island became healthy enough, but there was no trade. The coal was left almost untouched and there was little prospect of advancement.

Finally the Colony of Labuan was maintained by a sum of money provided by the British Government and its affairs came under the notice of Parliament at least once a year when the annual vote was put before Members

In 1848 Members of Parliament in London were asked to vote £6827 for Labuan's maintenance during the following year. Joseph Hume, M.P., a Scot, objected. It was too much money he said. Official salaries in Labuan, especially the Governor's salary of £2000, were too big for a colony only just started and he moved that the vote be reduced to £3000.

In 1850 Richard Cobden M.P., the well-known free-trader, complained in the House of Commons about the costs and Sir James Brooke's salary of £2000. At his own request it was cut to £150

Sir James' frequent absence from Labuan was criticised, but Henry Drummond M.P. in defence of Sir James said that in the past year Sir James had spent 60 days in boats, 160 days on board ships, and for 98 days had been ill. The vote before the House was for £6914 and was approvd.

Colonel Thompson, M.P. said that he did not like far-flung adventures in the course of territorial expansion. While admitting the extraordinary exploits of Sir James Brooke he objected to the establishment of Labuan, as a Colony, believing that it would lead not to the promotion of peaceful commerce but to "the infliction of the greatest calamities on the population of that part of the world".

Every humane man, continued Colonel Thompson, must shudder as he read the operations of British warships, and the indiscriminate massacre that had taken place.

Colonel Thompson was referring to the overwhelming victory and destruction of the pirate fleets at the battle of Batang (or River) Maru on 31st July 1849. The battle had a marked influence on the future of Labuan and the career of its first Governor.

There had been a very serious outbreak of piracy and Spenser St John later described the amount of lost shipping and the destruction of villages as appalling. Captain Keppel's actions in 1843 and 1844 had paralysed the pirates for a time, and James Brooke had organised a defence against pirates with the help of his faithful Malays, but gradually the pirates got the upper hand, and

eventually Sultan Omar Ali himself begged Sir James to take action against the Seribas and Sekarran Sea-dyaks, because of their ravages. Sir James took what action he could from Kuching and with his own Malays and the boats of H.C.S. *Nemesis* he raided the Sea dyaks' country early in 1849 and checked the piracy for a time. The Sea-dyak country at the time was outside the state of Sarawak and was part of Brunei This marked the beginning of charges made against Sir James by a grossly false account published in a Singapore newspaper and copied by the London *Daily News*.

A final blow had to be struck against the Sea-dyaks, but despite all his efforts Sir James could not get the aid of a British warship. The China Squadron, as Admiral Cochrane had pointed out to the Admiralty, was not large enough to carry out all the duties assigned to it, and could not spare a ship for service in Borneo Sir James at last succeeded in persuading Admiral Sir Francis Collier to send Commander Farquhar H.M.S. *Albatross* to Sarawak. H.C.S. *Nemesis* Captain T. Wallage, and H.C.S. *Semiramis* also took part in the expedition, with Sir James *Royalist*, a sloop of war.

In the battle of Batang Maru which followed nearly one hundred pirate war-boats were destroyed and eight hundred pirates perished.

The conduct of past campaigns had already given rise to charges against Sir James and now again much graver charges were made against him. A full account of this battle is given in the

Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1925, at page 252 and a recent issue of the Sarawak Museum Journal, December 1954, contains a description of the battle, of the ships engaged and gives a memoir of Captain T. Wallage of H.C.S. *Nemesis*, whose name so well befits the retribution she inflicted on the pirates.

Sir James accompanied the squadron on board H.M.S. *Albatross* under the command of Captain Farquhar R.N.

The squadron sailed to Batang Maru, in the country of the Sarebas and Sekarran people, north of the mouth of River Semanggang, and there cast anchor.

A large pirate fleet with most of the chiefs on board and manned by about 4,000 Orang laut was away at sea on a pirate cruise and would return soon. To reach their homes the pirates must enter the estuaries at Batang Maru, and Captain Farquhar decided to lie in ambush for them. H.M.S. *Albatross* took station to guard against surprise attack on Sarawak River and Sir James' *Royalist* guarded Batang Lupar. Their boats blocked the mouths of the rivers preventing the pirates from going up-stream, and H.C.S. *Nemesis* took station to prevent the pirates escaping by sea. Sir James' men numbered 2,500 and they manned seventy four boats. Most of them were traders and fishermen who had suffered severely at the hands of the pirates.

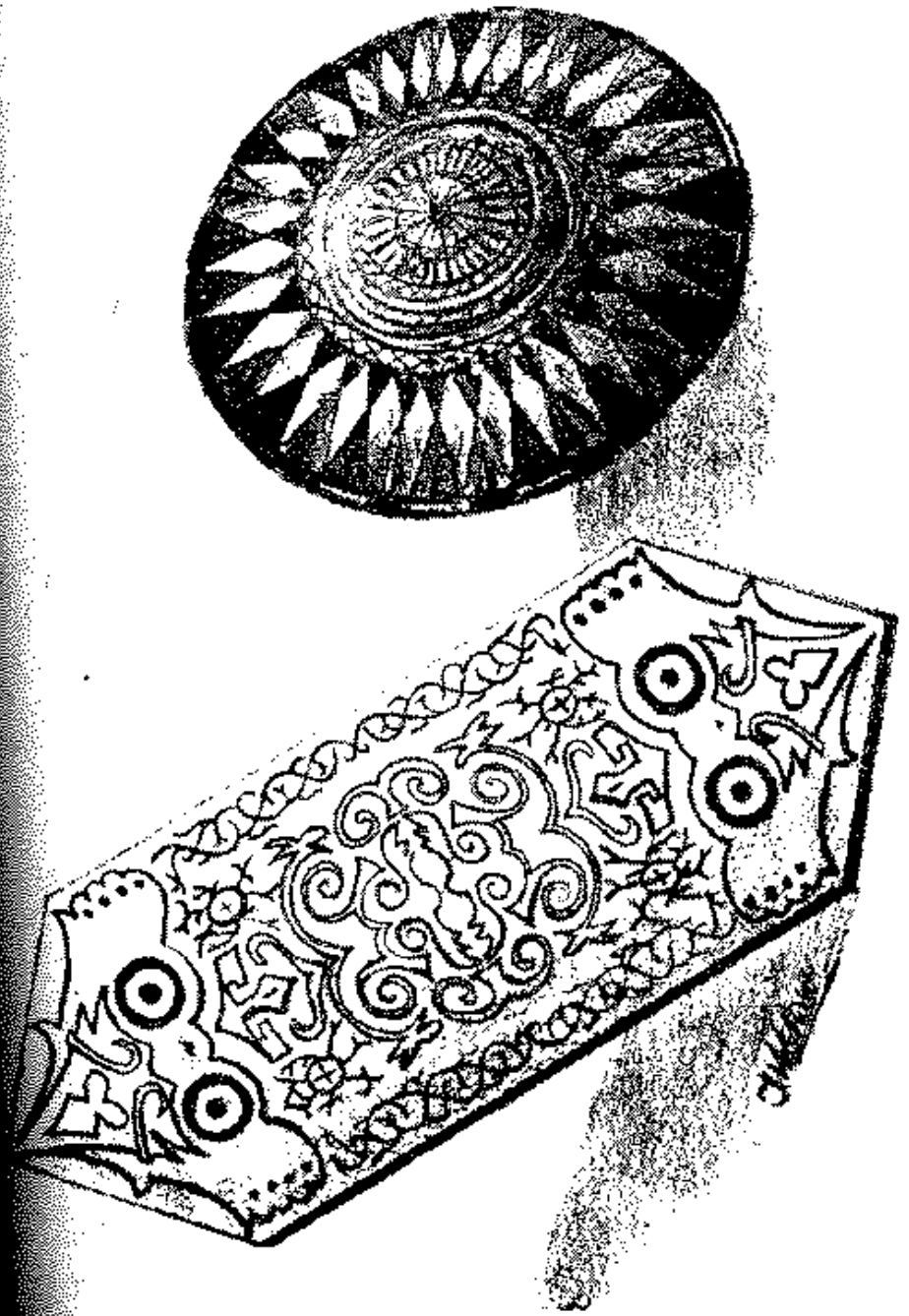
The pirate fleet arrived home at midnight and paddled straight into the trap set for them. They

never suspected the presence of the ships till they were fired on. After a few minutes hesitation, the pirates made for the boats guarding the rivers, but failed to force a passage through them. H.C.S. *Nemesis* now steamed up and opened fire, riddling the pirates' prahus which could make no effective reply. The pirates had four small cannon, and each prahu had four or five muskets. The Orang laut soon found their position to be desperate and some drove their prahus ashore and escaped into the jungle. Part of the pirate fleet tried to escape to sea, but H.C.S. *Nemesis* gave chase and passing slowly down the line poured a broadside of grape and cannister into each prahu in turn. In a few minutes the pirate fleet was shot to pieces and H.C.S. *Nemesis* turning back steamed over the mass of sinking prahus and struggling pirates. The scene when the Orang laut were caught up in the paddle-wheels of the steamer and were churned and pounded to a pulp in the starlight was terrible.

Daybreak saw the bay and shores of Batang Maru covered with broken prahus, shields, spears and bodies of the slain. In the jungle, the corpses of several women who had been murdered and horribly mutilated by the pirates in the anger of their defeat were found. These women had been made captive during the pirates' cruise.

Captain Farquhar saw a group of three thousand pirates trapped on a peninsula and he thought that by occupying its narrow neck they could all be destroyed. Sir James however wished to avoid

the shedding of blood unnecessarily, and hoping that the lesson taught them was sufficiently severe, he allowed them to escape.



A native hat and shield

Out of the total pirate fleet of over one hundred *bangkongs* or war boats only six escaped, while of 4,000 pirates about 500 were killed and about 300 more died of hunger or wounds, making the total loss about 800. To drive the lesson home, the naval expedition ascended the rivers, destroyed the Seribas and Sekarran villages and ravaged their country far and wide.

Captain Wallage (wrote Mr. W. John Ruff in the Sarawak Museum Journal) after the battle of Batang Maru was put in command of H.C.S. *Enterprise*, based at Calcutta. He died within a few months and was buried in Chowringhee, Calcutta.

H.C.S. *Nemesis* was an iron paddle-steamer with a tonnage of 630 tons. She was 184 feet long. Her engines were of 120 horse-power, and she saw much service in Eastern seas.

The Seribas and Sekarrans at once made submission to Sir James, promising to abandon piracy. The Sea-dyak country was then outside Sarawak, but Sultan Omar Ali of Brunei gladly ceded it to Brooke on his return from England in 1853 and though there was some struggle between rival parties for a time, the new subjects soon settled down under the rule of Sir James.

The charges made against Sir James' administration of Sarawak by Members of Parliament and the debates in the House of Commons in July 1850 and July 1851 are on record. Joseph Hume was the mover for an enquiry, and what Joseph Hume said in Parliament included all the ignorance or ill nature could discover. Captain

Keppel wrote that Joseph Hume advanced two propositions and the Captain on behalf of Sir James denied them both. The first proposition was that the Malays and Dyaks of Serebas and Sekarran were not pirates at all, and the second proposition was that supposing these people to have been pirates, an unjustifiable loss of life was inflicted on them by the warships which attacked their fleet at Batang Maru and destroyed it.

Sir James visited Labuan for a few days from December 24th to December 28th 1851. He expressed himself as well satisfied with the progress of Labuan, though it was slow. There was a glimmering of confidence amongst the natives of the coast and time would free the Colony from obstructions cast in its way by Brunei.

Where there had been strife amongst the Europeans there was now a Christmas spirit of peace and goodfellowship. Trade had began to creep into the place, and if there was reliance on right principles, he thought it would rise in spite of the factious outcry in England and the ill-will of Brunei.

"Thus much", concluded the Governor. "I can write no more in detail in my present condition." He was then on the point of returning to England to face the charges made against him.

Batang Maru was the concern of Sir James in respect of all three of his offices: as Rajah of Sarawak, as Consul General for Borneo and as Governor of Labuan.

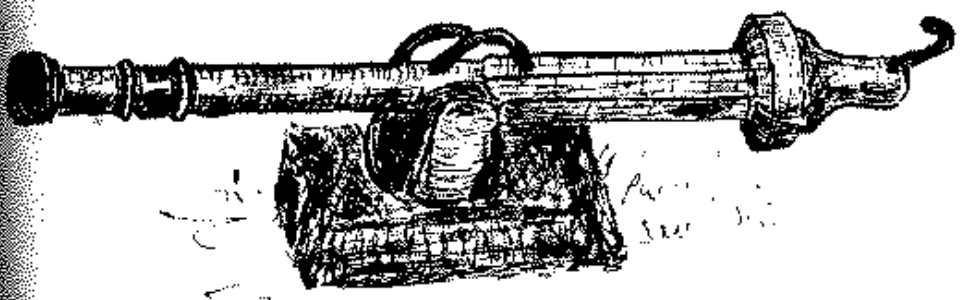
The enquiry into Sir James administration was held at Singapore in September and October 1854 by a Royal Commission consisting of two officials of the East India Company, Mr Prinsep and Mr Devereux. Witness after witness, European and Asian, testified to countless acts of piracy committed by the Seribas and Sekarran Dyaks. Last of all came the crowning proof that they were pirates. Though the Netherlands Government was bitterly opposed to Brooke rule, an important official of Dutch Borneo, passing through Singapore, heard of the enquiry and offered his evidence. Mr Boudriot, from his own personal knowledge and from the information in the Dutch official records, proved that the Orang Laut were in fact pirates and the "scourge and terror of the coast." The two commissioners found that the charge of piracy was fully proven and that the theory of legitimate inter-tribal warfare was ridiculous. As to the loss of life at Batang Maru and the subsequent ravaging of the country, Mr Devereux considerd that there did not appear to be any reasonable ground for sympathy with a race of indiscriminate murderers. The enquiry also completely disproved another favourite charge of his foes that Sir James had used his position as Governor to further his interests as a private trader. There was not a shred of evidence that he had engaged in trade after his appointment as Governor of Labuan in 1847.

Mr Prinsep and Mr Devereux did not see eye to eye in every matter, and each sent his own report. The Commission of enquiry lasted nearly

our years with much open wrangling and erbal warfare, and at the end Sir James was leared of all the fantastic and humiliating charges nd was free to leave for England.

The Commission declared the charges against ir James to be not proven.

One result of the complaints and criticism was he immediate abolition of "head money" in the avy. This affected the crews of men-of-war erving in these seas. Head money was payable o the crews and reckoned according to the umber of pirates killed. Twenty pounds was he reward for each pirate killed. £30,000 was oted by Parliament for the naval men who had ken part in the Battle of Batang Maru, and the dmiralty paid out £20,700.



A swivel cannon

The abolition of head money had been deter-ined on and the bill prepared for presentation Parliament. In this connection Captain eppel wrote that he did not believe that there as a man in the Navy who did not prefer its olition to the imputation of taking another an's life for money.

After Batang Maru the Admiralty tighten
its instructions to Captains and no warship co
seize a vessel for piracy unless the vessel h
"within view attacked some British vessel",
unless there was "such proof as would satisfy
Court of Admiralty". This tied the hands
Captains and led to another outbreak of pir
in Borneo waters.

The Captains of the British warships were ve
much handicapped and the pirates took
advantage of the greater freedom of action allow
to themselves.

Labuan carried on a peaceful existence wh
its Governor was engaged in political strugg
with Parliamentarians at home. These worr
much affected Sir James who was of a sensit
type. He was, wrote Spenser St John, of a ve
excitable and nervous temperament. He w
"a pleasing, considerate companion," wi
whom Spenser St John lived on affectionate a
intimate terms for fourteen years, but Sir Jam
was never again the even-tempered, gay co
panion of former days.

In January 1851 Sir James sailed for Englan
and Lieutenant Governor John Scott took char
at Labuan for a year or more.

When Sir James returned to Sarawak he f
sick with smallpox, a scourge of the coasts.
was a bad case and Dr McDougall, Bishop a
Surgeon, was away. It was a near thing.
James' body was covered with pistules and h
face was so swollen as to be unrecognisab
However the illness ran its course and had

fect of calming his temper. In August 1853 e sailed from Kuching to Labuan and was glad o reach the island where old friends respected im. They were much moved by his altered ppearance. The disease had clawed his cheeks nd his face was pitted. He had lost all his air, though it grew again later.

"You will not like me the less for being a little glier," he said genially to his friends.

His tenure of office was now nearing its end. He went yet again to England and on returning o Borneo in 1855 he resigned his appointment s Consul General.

Mr Graham Irwin in his "Nineteeth Century Borneo" at page 137 writes that James Brooke both by character and experience was ill-suited or an appointment in the public service. He was too fond of having his own way and too impatient of interference in his plans. Captain Keppel, his great friend, had little favourable to say about his administration of Labuan.

"My friend Brooke," said Captain Keppel, has as much idea of business as a cow has of a clean shirt."

But he had competent administrators with him and John Scott, Hugh Low and Spenser St John all rose to high appointments elsewhere in the British Empire.

Sir James died in England in 1868.

CHAPTER 5

ASHORE AND AFLOAT

ON the resignation of Sir James Brooke as Governor of Labuan John Scott succeeded to the appointment. John Scott had served first as Surveyor-General, as Senior Magistrate and as a member of the Legislative Council. In 1849 he became Acting Lieutenant-Governor and Treasurer. In 1850 he was appointed Governor, an appointment which he held till 1856 when he became Governor of Natal and later of British Guiana.

Labuan did not fulfil its promise commercially but from its earliest days, Labuan had changed the character of slavery all along the coast and with the help of the navy exerted great influence. Formerly, slave-owners on the mainland could treat their slaves as harshly as they wished, but, as Spenser St John wrote, masters learned their lesson and if they had not treated slaves more kindly, the slaves would have escaped to Labuan. As a result of better treatment the masters could send their slaves to Labuan on business and await their slaves' voluntary return to the mainland.

Piracy was not yet done with, and the year 1858 was marked by a great revival of it. A great scandal was caused when Panglima Taupan of Tawi-Tawi, an island on the north-east coast

of Borneo, captured a Spanish vessel. Every person on board was massacred except a young girl, the daughter of a Spanish merchant, and Panglima Taupan took her for a wife.

Pirates' war-boats were of a different build from our sailors' ships. The chief difference was that pirates rowed while our sailors sailed.

A prahu hailing from the Sulu Sea had a timber hull with upper works of bamboo, rattan or kajang. About a foot above the water line ran a strongly built gallery in which the rowers sat cross-legged. In the afterpart was a cabin for the use of the pirate chief. The prahu, for its whole length, was covered by a strongly built flat roof upon which the pirates used kris and spears. A shortage of elbow room on these prahus hindered the pirates from fighting at their best.

A Dyak warboat, hailing from the rivers on the Sarawak coast, was a long dugout or canoe, more strongly built than a prahu. The Dyak warboat could hold seventy or eighty men. Its rowers sat in a tier below and above them was the fighting platform, after the manner of a prahu The Dyak boats were gaily painted, and the stern was ornamented with feathers. The war-boat had a special room to accommodate a head of special value, as for instance a white man's head. Illustrations of these two types of war-boats are shown on pages 85 and 86.

While the sailors' ships were often becalmed, these pirate war vessels could row at speed.

Piracy on the Sarawak coast, let it be said, was organised not so much by the people of Sarawak, as by others lurking in Sarawak rivers.

All along the north coast the work of the British Navy in suppressing piracy and in making channels safe for trading ships had been praised and the names of our Admirals and Captains live in history of the South China and Sulu Seas. To any man who ruled the sea the native seafarers give the name of *Rajah Laut.* Admiral Sir Henry

On the coast of Labuan

Keppel was widely known as *Rajah Laut*, a title of honour, be it said. *Orang Laut*, men of the sea, were pirates and much feared, but *Rajah Laut*, King of the Sea is not the chief pirate as might be supposed.

Rajah Laut was the title given to a man who could be trusted, who could protect merchants and traders at sea and who could rule and if need be subdue the *Orang Laut*. Thus Sir Henry Keppel was *Rajah Laut* and another was Lord Jim Lingard, who appears in Joseph Conrad's book, Lord Jim.

Admiralty instructions forbidding H.M. Ships to seize vessels for piracy unless the vessels had been seen to attack British shipping or without definite proof of piracy led to a revival of piracy, but this in its turn was suppressed.

The Illanuns and Balanini in North Borneo still remained to be reckoned with. The battle of Batang Maru had driven the pirates from Sarawak and then finally in 1879 the last stronghold in the north at Tungku, east of Sandakan, was rooted out by H.M.S. *Kestrel* with the help of Spanish warships.

In Labuan trade slowly increased, and the few, very Chinese merchants who had settled on the mainland began to take more interest in the island, but much more important were the Towkays who came from Singapore.

That a Chinese Empire once existed in Brunei is accepted as a fact of history, but very few Chinese were living in Brunei or any part of Borneo.

In 1847 after the declaration that Labuan was open to settlers Chinese traders from Singapore began to open shops in Labuan and thence they spread to the mainland. Their first attempt to develop agriculture on the mainland was not successful.

A prosperous shopkeeper in Labuan obtained a grant of land from the Sultan of Brunei and began to plant fruits, vegetables and pepper. The pepper grew luxuriantly. As soon as the gardens produced a crop, crowds of idle people from the town of Brunei invaded it and stripped it of everything. No other Chinese had the courage to try plantations again for many years.

The Chinese who came from Singapore married into native families along the coast and later when confidence grew they opened pepper gardens along the shore of Brunei Bay. Papar also was a favoured place because Pengiran Omar who ruled the district was a reasonable man. When quarrels arose the Chinese on the mainland sought protection from Labuan, but unhappily the Chinese traders in Labuan treated native people with some contempt.

The year 1867 marked the transfer of Singapore from the India Office to the Colonial Office. This ended a connection between the Colonial Government of Labuan and the Hon'ble East India Company's Government of Singapore. How the Company helped the young Colony through its most difficult days of sickness and lack of resources when it first began has been told in previous pages. The assistance of the Company's

Governors in Singapore was always given readily. Their ships and their Captains were in the vanguard of every attack upon pirates' fleets and strongholds, and the Company's hospitality welcomed the Colony's officials on their voyages to and from England. It was the Company's administrators who had enquired into the charges made against Sir James Brooke and acquitted him, and the bond between Labuan and Singapore was close. People in Singapore had often vented their grievances about Company rule.

The grievances which Singapore people said they suffered under the Company were legion. This is no place to enmuerate them, but there were two to which reference may be made.

One of the many grievance at Singapore was that after its foundation the Directors hankered for and often proposed to levy small duties on the trade of Singapore. The lesson taught by Sir Stamford Raffles had been well learned and merchants in the Straits Settlements never failed to resent most bitterly the slightest hint of imposing taxes on commerce in after years. Labuan in 1848 had followed the example of Singapore and was declared to be a free port. Never having been under the Company's rule. Labuan had nothing to fear from the Company's threats to tax merchants and Labuan could watch from a safe position. Labuan's turn for taxation came later.

Another grievance at Singapore was that the Company made Singapore a dumping ground for Indian convicts of the worst type.

The Company never dumped convicts in Labuan though labourers recruited in Singapore service in Labuan were often of a bad type and may have been convicts formerly.

Labuan's complaint that the British Government made it into a penal settlement is well-founded. Long-sentence prisoners from Hong Kong were sent there to work in the coal mines, though work underground was not enforced against the prisoners' will, and after Singapore was transferred from the East India Company to the Colonial Office in 1867 convicts were sent from Singapore to Labuan.

Labuan wore a penal aspect because prisoners were often engaged in repairing the roads in chain gangs, and they bunkered ships and loaded cargoes of coal.

In Singapore the East India Company suffered a drain upon its resources which received no replenishment from taxes. Nor was there any hope of profit. On the contrary, there was a constant demand upon the Company's ships and men for imperial service, and the ships and men were offered freely.

The courage of many men of many nations in the service of the Company and the constant supply of money by the merchants of London is often forgotten in the haze of abuse and criticism for seeking profits. Labuan owes a debt to the old East India Company.

The history of the East India Company in the Straits Settlements is the story of a great trust well and faithfully performed, and Labuan people

had the benefit of the Company's aid and support at a time when Labuan needed a good neighbour.

In Labuan with the decline of piracy anxieties about the defence of the island grew less and officials began to look about for means of relaxation.

Officials in Labuan rarely believed in overwork, and some of them sent out on good salaries in early days seem to have made it their object to do as little as possible in return. Labuan had in their view an enervating climate and was a poor place for sport and other healthy amusement, so some naturally took to dissipation. A few who had ambition or could not help it, foolishly did overwork and fell sick with what was called "Labuan fever." The men who got on best were those who were moderate in their work as an in everything else.

Even the Governor in his fine residence surrounded by a beautiful park could become bored and find time pass all too slowly.

One of the Governors took to keeping cows as a pastime. As he could get as many prisoners as he chose to look after his cows it was not an expensive hobby. He began butter making and with success he soon had more butter in his larder than Government House needed. The surplus was stored in pots while still sweet and fresh. By and by the butter began to smell and the Governor had to take notice of it. His A.D.C. would then write a few polite notes and afflict prominent officials of Labuan with a present of Governor's butter. Wives would write insincere

letters of thanks for the welcome and delicious gift while husbands watched their gardeners to see that they buried the butter deep enough.

Relations between Labuan and its neighbour Sarawak were not always happy, nor it must be admitted, was the Governor's knowledge of affairs as accurate as it should have been.

The action of George Edwardes, Governor of Labuan, and acting Consul General, led to trouble.

Serip Musahor, of Serikei, at the mouth of Rejang River in Sarawak, had organised in the year 1862 an extensive conspiracy to overthrow Sir James Brooke's Government in Sarawak, the idea being to murder each separate government officer throughout the territory. At the outset this plan was successful and Fox, the Resident, and Steele, the Assistant Resident of the Rejang were both murdered at Kanowit before rumour of the plot against them reached their ears. Sir James' forces attacked Serip Musahor who fled to Mukah with the connivance and consent of Sultan Abdul Mumin to whom that place belonged.

George Edwardes, Governor of Labuan, as Acting Consul General was charged with supervision of affairs in Borneo and in his capacity as Acting Consul General he thought fit to summon a British man-of-war. When H.M.S. *Victoria* arrived, George Edwardes proceeded.

Edwardes had always held that Sarawak was a bad influence and he disapproved of Sir James. He could not agree that Sir James was right in holding Serip Musahor responsible for the murder

of Fox and Steele. He listened to Serip Musahor's side of the story and supported him.

Meanwhile Sir James, with his younger brother Charles, arrived at the mouth of Muka River north of Rejang River intending to get in touch with the defiant chieftains and talk over the matter. The chieftains however fired on Sir James' boat. Sir James landed his men, built a fort ashore, and sent Charles Brooke to fetch reinforcements. These came after a month and the combined force then amounted to twelve Europeans with many followers. Sir James advanced to attack the Chieftains' stockade, and had forced an entry when H.M.S. *Victoria* hove in sight with Acting Consul General George Edwardes on board.

George Edwardes proclaimed a truce in the Queen's name. At that moment Serip Musahor appeared. George Edwardes would not listen to Sir James, and threatened to order H.M.S. *Victoria* to open fire with her guns upon Sir James' troop if he proceeded further with the attack. Sir James having neither the wish nor the power to resist George Edwarde's menaces ordered Charles Brooke to withdraw his troops though the enemy continued to fire on them.

Thus George Edwardes had supported with his authority and, if necessary, the guns of H.M.S. *Victoria* the murderers of two British subjects in the service of Sir James, the murderers at the time accompanying Serip Musahor's forces.

Sir James, in the face of the unreasonable and irritating threats of George Edwardes, withdrew

from Muka, and the Seribas Dyaks who had fought on the side of Serip Mushahor did not fail to recount with exultation how the Consul General, as representative of the Queen, had put a warship at the service of Serip Mushahor.

For the time Serip Mushahor and his band of assassins had the advantage, but the matter was referred to London.

Lord John Russell, Secretary of State, decided against his Consul General.

The British Government expressed its disapproval of George Edwardes' action and the Colonial Office censured him and removed him from the Governorship. Mr Jeremiah Callaghan was appointed in his stead that same year.

Piracy was spasmodic when H.M.S. *Bulldog*, gunboat, arrived at Labuan one day to inquire into piracies and outrages in which one of the Sultan's brothers was implicated.

The Sultan had been warned to check his brothers' raids in waters near Labuan, for they were British waters, and disasters would surely overtake his brother if the raids continued. But the temptations to pick up prizes in Labuan waters close to home were too great, the piracies continued and soon brought H.M.S. *Bulldog* on the scene.

The naval Commander found *Wild Irish Girl*, a trading vessel, in Labuan harbour, sent for her master John Ross and requisitioned his services to pilot *Bulldog* up Brunei River. Brunei river was dangerous to navigation by reason of sunken vessels and stone barriers placed so as to compel

vessels entering the river to come under the guns of the battery on Pulau Chermin. Captain Ross undertook the duty, piloted *Bulldog* up the river and anchored her at a convenient distance for bombarding the city if required to do so. All the Brunei batteries remained silent during the passage and the war ship's boats pulled for the Sultan's palace. Captain Ross accompanied the naval Commander ashore as tnterpreter.

Captain Ross knew his way about Brunei and knew Sultan Abdul Mumin himself, for he was in trade between Brunei and Singapore. He had formerly been assistant and secretary to Clunies Ross of the Cocos Islands and later had bought *Wild Irish Girl* in Australia to trade. She was a brig and carried a crew of Malays and vagabonds who had their own reasons for wishing to quit Australia. Captain Ross' help was much appreciated in the enquiry and the naval Commander made full use of his services.

Sultan Abdul Mumin received his visitors with much ceremony and dignity, but the naval Commander had no sense of formality and told Captain Ross to hasten matters. Captain Ross' unpleasant task was to tell His Highness that his brother's crimes must now be expiated and that the only punishment for piracy was death. Possibly no person except Captain Ross could have persuaded the Sultan that it was useless to delay and prevaricate at such a crisis. The naval Commander decided that the execution of the Sultan's brother should take place next morning.

When daylight broke, onlookers saw a la
prahu moored opposite the Sultan's palace and
platform erected on the deck of the prahu.

Captain Ross aboard H.M.S. *Bulldog* w
invited by the naval Commander but refused
attend the execution saying it was no part of h
duty and so boats from the British warship we
alongside the prahu without him. In the sig
of all a handsome person, dressed in the roy
yellow of Brunei, was led to the platform, an
set in a kneeling position on the scaffold. A cor
was passed round his neck by two of the Sultan'
executioners and in the next instant he wa
choking in a death struggle. The naval Com
mander with his boats returned to H.M.S. *Bull
dog*, satisfied that the sentence of death had been
carried into effect, the garrot being the usual
method of execution of princes at the court of
Brunei.

Captain Ross piloted H.M.S *Bulldog* back to
Labuan having completed his duty, and boarded
his brig *Wild Irish Girl*.

But was the man in yellow robes really the
Sultan's brother? Only Captain Ross could have
identified him because he knew the Sultan's
family and he had chosen to absent himself from
the execution. However from that day the raids
on Labuan waters ceased and though the Sultan's
brother was supposed to have sent a substitute to
the scaffold he never appeared again in Brunei.
Rumour said that he went to Palawan or Sulu in
the Philippines.

Not a word ever passed between the Sultan or Captain Ross about the execution. Although the Sultan had small reason to thank him for having piloted the British warship up Brunei river and for having got judgment in twenty four hours, yet his absence from the execution had a great effect and he became a greater favourite at the Sultan's court than ever.

Captain Ross was not only a good sailor, but a clever diplomatist.

Captain Ross was the pioneer of trade and commerce on regular lines between Singapore, Labuan and Brunei. His son John D. Ross has written memoirs of his trade in his book "Sixty years: Travel and Adventure in the Far East." His chapters on Labuan of old days are full of interest and for much of the information recorded in my pages I am indebted to him. He disguised his own and other names in many of his memoirs.

Cargoes out of Brunei were valuable and the loading of trading vessels in Brunei River was in the hands of the Captain China of Brunei who kept himself in close touch with the Sultan to whom dues had to be paid. There was competition by sailing ships to get this trade and *Wild Irish Girl* pushed others out of it. Captain Ross took advantage of his success, sold his brig and bought a larger brig called *Lizzie Weber.* This brig fought a gallant action against pirates in waters near Labuan.

Lizzie Weber sailed out of Singapore with a full cargo, called at Labuan and arrived at Brunei after a fine passage and an uneventful voyage.

Brunei River was crowded with craft from Mindanau, Sulu and other places. The *nakodahs* of these craft frequently paid friendly visits on board *Lizzie Weber* and sold their cargoes of produce. *Nakodah* Si Rahman repeatedly came on board *Lizzie Weber* under the pretext of trade, which however never came to the point, and Kassim, a Javanese Malay and chief native officer on *Lizzie Weber* became suspicious of him and declared him to be an Illanun. Illanuns were reputed to be fierce pirates, and though Captain Ross noticed that Si Rahman was curious about the armament of *Lizzie Weber* and her battery of twelve-pounders, he paid no attention to his native officer's warnings.

Lizzie Weber dropped down Brunei River and made for Labuan, where she completed her cargo and took on board Mr Meldrum, the only passenger on that voyage. The brig sailed one fine afternoon out of Labuan with a light and fitful breeze. During the night the current set her over towards Brunei coast and at daylight, as she rounded a point, Captain Ross saw not less than eight Illanun vessels lying in wait for him in a little bay. The wind had became a calm and left his brig without steerage-way.

All was hurry and bustle on board *Lizzie Weber*. Men beat to quarters, guns were run out and rifles and cutlasses served round. The Captain's wife was on board, and he went below to give her a revolver with the strictest instructions to remain in her cabin during the coming fight and to shoot her little son first and then herself if the pirates carried the ship.

Captain Ross took up his position on the quarter deck and events developed rapidly. The pirate squadron came up at a great speed each prahu pulling forty oars or more. The pirates were several hundreds strong and if they had rowed straight to fight, the fate of *Lizzie Weber* would have been settled within half an hour.

That fortunately is not the native way of doing things. The pirate prahus pulled round the brig in a circle and then the leading prahu swept towards her until the vessels were within easy hail of each other. Right amid ships of the leading pirate prahu stood a conspicuous figure in a scarlet jacket, *Nakodah* Si Rahman himself. The pirate chief began by hailing Captain Ross by name and saying that he had come as a friend. He was short of tobacco and wished to go aboard and buy some. To this Captain Ross replied that he knew a pirate when he saw one and if the prahus which surrounded his brig did not sheer off, he would open fire at once. *Nakhoda* Si Rahman bade Captain Ross give up his brig without a useless struggle especially as he himself was *kabal* — invulnerable to any sort of wounds.

Kassim on the maindeck of *Lizzie Weber* anxiously watched his Captain's movements and thinking that a wave of the hand gave him liberty to open fire, he did so and discharged the gun, of which he was in charge, at the pirate prahu, much to the anger of the mate Mr Simpson.

Lizzie Weber carried a battery of six twelve-pounder guns, and there were half a dozen muskets for every sailor on board, thanks to a

recent purchase of a few cases of American muskets from a Yankee Captain. All these muskets had been loaded before fighting began. So *Lizzie Weber's* sailors had only to throw down an empty musket and pick up a loaded one to maintain a rapid fire.

The brig, like other trading vessels on the coast, carried a crew numerous enough to work her cargo as well as to sail her. There were three European men and forty Malays on board.

Her twelve-pounder guns were each loaded with round shot and with a canvas bag of bullets rammed home on top of it, making a most effective charge at close range.

From the moment that Kassim had fired the first shot *Lizzie Weber* kept up a hot fire with her guns and musketry. The pirates replied vigorously. Their prahus mounted a number of light guns, and their sides were strengthened by bulworks, built up breast high of ***billian*** iron wood, strong enough to withstand the impact of a round shot.

The yells of the pirates rose above the roar of the guns and the rattle of musketry. Simpson and three sailors were carried below wounded within a few minutes and Mrs Ross attended to them. This courageous woman had plenty of trouble on her hands, because son Johnnie made frantic attempts in the din of battle to escape to the upper deck to see what daddy was doing. His mother finally carried him away by main force, kicking and screaming with rage, and locked him up in a spare cabin.

The lady, a true captain's wife, kept her wits about her. Powder was running short for the guns, and a couple of Malay sailors were sent to bring up some kegs from the magazine. The thoughtless sailors went below with a naked light to the magazine which was right aft and could be got at through a scuttle in a store room. Mrs Ross saw what was afoot, and reached the sailor just in time to prevent him going in. Grabbing the naked light, she threw it out of a porthole into the sea. The magazine not only contained kegs of gun powder, but its floor was covered with a lot of loose gunpowder and the brig would have been blown up in an instant. After that she stood in the magazine and handed up the powder herself A Captain's wife needed to keep her wits about her in those days.

Captain Ross himself was fighting his ship for all he was worth. His best attempts were made to slay *Nakodah* Si Rahman, who stood amidships on his vessel, like a scarlet demon directing the pirates' attack and exposing himself to a rattling fire in full confidence that he was invulnerable.

"For goodness sake", roared Captain Ross to his passenger Meldrum, "bowl over that red ruffian". Meldrum loaded a new American rifle methodically, aimed and missed. The Captain himself fired a few shots at the man from a smoothbore carbine without any better result. Scores of shots were fired at *Nakodah* Si Rahman from the main-deck and forecastle without success.

Kassim tried round shot and bags of bullets and they took effect on the rest of the crew in the prahu but not on Si Rahman, who was well aware that shots were aimed at him. He openly challenged them relying on the magic which made him *kabal.*

After three hours of fighting, there came a lull. Captain Ross went round his decks. He ordered the heated twelve-pounders to be sponged out and made ready for further action, and all the small arms re-loaded. Scarcely had he finished his round, when he saw the pirate prahus sweeping down upon him under rapid strokes of their oars. *Nakodah* Si Rahman, it was evident, had given up his attempt to wear down the brig's resistance by picking off her crew and exhausting her ammunition. He decided to try to do now what he might have tried to do before. He would throw hundreds of his armed men on her decks and capture her by boarding.

Eight pirate prahus made a dash for the starboard side of the brig, leaving her port battery silent and idle.

The starboard guns kept up their fire, but the approaching prahus lay so low in the water that soon the gunners on *Lizzie Weber* could not depress the muzzles of their guns low enough to hit the prahus.

Nakodah Si Rahman's own prahu was the best manned of the pirate fleet and rapidly drew ahead of the others. He was almost alongside the brig when Kassim decided on a final shot.

Captain Ross seeing that the shot must fly too high called to Kassim.

"Train the gun on the thwart and kill Si Rahman!"

Kassim with his hand showed that he had the wedge beneath the gun's breech as far as it would go and that he could depress the muzzle no further. Captain Ross sprang forward and bending down he put forth the whole of his giant strength and lifted the gun carriage bodily while Kassim and another sailor rolled a heavy spar beneath the gun carriage. This had the effect of depressing the muzzle much further, and taking a glance along the sights, Captain Ross fired the gun.

Before the smoke cleared, yells arose from the pirate prahu, and when Captain Ross looked over the bulwarks of his brig, he saw a pile of wreckage and Si Rahman himself as a scarlet patch in the water swirling round the sinking prahu. That was the end of its fiery Illanun chief.

Other pirate prahus rescued as many of the survivors from the sinking prahu as they could and pulled away from the brig, and then at last a gentle breeze came and *Lizzie Weber* began to get way on her. Once more the guns and the muskets were put into a state of readiness. The tired crew had their first meal during the day and the brig was put into fighting trim to face next attak.

The pirate fleet still haunted the brig. Their rowers could pull much faster than she could sail in the gentle breeze and it was clear to those

on board the brig that their foes were waiting for the darkness to deliver their next attack. Fate looked grim, but there was hope, because the breeze was freshening all the time. *Lizzie Webb* had begun to slip a little faster through the water when the pirates closed on her from both sides under the rays of the setting sun. Again the fight raged on both sides of the brig. When Mrs Ross stepped up to the quarter deck to tell her husband, only six kegs of gunpowder were left in the magazine. She kept this urgent news a secret from the crew.

"Send up the six kegs", said Captain Ross to his wife, "Leave the rest to me. Obey my orders. Go down to the cabin".

The end seemed near. The gallant lady did not even stay to say goodbye. She went below to carry out orders, which included the shooting of her son and herself if need be.

Six kegs of powder would allow the guns to fire one more round apiece, with something to spare for the muskets.

Captain Ross decided that the time had come when instead of trying to escape he must attack. It was a desperate venture. He put his helm down and spilled his sails. He sailed towards the fleet firing his last broadside. He saw he had caught one of the prahu at his advantage. Jumping to the wheel he altered his course by a few points, and next minute there was a crash as the keel of the brig rode over the wreck of that prahu. Some of the pirates were shot as they swam in the water. Others with the agility of

men born to the sea, clambered up the brig's chains to reach the deck, where they were promptly cut down.

In the confusion, a rising wind filled the brig's sails and bore her out of battle into safety.

The fight had lasted all day from dawn to dusk.

After this fight the fast sailing *Lizzie Weber* required expensive refitting. She was sold and *Don Pedro*, more than twice the size, replaced her on the Labuan run. She also was a sailing vessel. *Don Pedro*, on her maiden voyage out of Singapore, carried a detachment of India troops under Major Barclay for Labuan. It was a fine run. Time passed agreeably on board. Reading, chess, whist, music, an occasional brandy and soda and Manila cheroots filled up the hours and the wives of Captain Ross and Major Barclay swore eternal friendship.

Captain Ross, now the proud master of the biggest vessel trading to Labuan, went into ecstasy as he made *Don Pedro* fast to the rickety wharf. The harbour, he wrote with rapture, was a splendid bay for commercial purposes. The wide expanse of deep tranquil water enabled ships to anchor a short distance from the shore. Nature had kindly placed a group of small islands off the entrance of the harbour to serve as a breakwater. Here was a beautiful harbour with a coal mine within ten miles of it. Of natural beauties Labuan had very few, but considering the island from a purely business view and viewing it through rose-coloured spectacles Captain Ross

thought there was no other harbour in the whole Far East offering so many facilities for the development of a mercantile port of the first order. To his deep regret however Labuan persisted in being an obscure and little frequented island.

On the island there was a regiment of sepoys, and a battery or two of artillery which gave some animation to the scene.

John Pope-Hennessy was Governor at that time and he was called the "Pope" for short. He was in many ways a remarkable man with a picturesque public career behind him. He had represented an Irish constituency in the House of Commons. Gifted with much ability and an unusual flow of speech, he had soon become a thorn rankling in the side of the government of the day.

As a silencer the governorship of Labuan, almost the furthest away in the east, was offered at a salary of some two thousand pounds a year, what with pay and allowances.

The budding colony wanted all the encouragement it could get but the "Pope" upraided the inhabitants and declared that the place must pay its way. To that end he saddled it with the cost of the garrison, clapped taxes on everything and almost choked the life out of the little colony. In those days colonial governors were not hooked to the end of a telegraph line and could make their own policy without reference home.

"What?" he cried, "no water and no taxes?"

Water was not plentiful on the little island and its supply could only be improved by the expenditure of money. The "Pope" made his servants and staff fetch water in boats all the way from Padas River for his consumption. The mouth of Padas River is not salubrious as a watering place, so the servants went a long way upriver to fetch good water.

The "Pope" had a daughter and would not admit that daughters of governors are born into this world to be the wives of secretaries or A.D.C's. The Secretary tried to follow this sensible order of nature but the "Pope" would not have it.

"How dare you make love to my daughter?" he stormed to his Secretary.

The Secretary persisted in his attentions, and the angry Governor took the law into his own hands. He called the Sergeant in charge of the police and clapped the Secretary into gaol. The gaol was a small place and usually empty. It was a warm place too and hardly the place where an ardent lover could cool down. The ventilation was poor and the Doctor on his visit took notice of this and protested to the Governor.

"You can't do this, Sir! What offence has he committed?"

"Can't I?" shouted the furious Governor. "Who are *you* to question my actions? This is treason!"

He bawled for the guard outside.

"Arrest this man and lock him in the gaol."

So into the gaol went the Doctor. Then a third man, a mere man of the people, a commoner, went to His Excellency to protest.

"*You*! Who do you think *you* are? Into gaol with the others!"

His daughter in tears sent some chicken soup to flavour the rice and water of affliction, but the Governor did not know of this. A captain of a local trading vessel heard of the Governor's tantrum, put to sea bound for Singapore and there he told the facts as he knew them.

One of the Admirals in Singapore who had recently visited Labuan told a similar yarn saying that when he visited Labuan every official in Labuan, excepting the Governor himself, was lodged in gaol. The matter could not be passed.

An enquiry was held, blame was attached to the climate, and the "Pope" was transferred on promotion.

During the governorship of the "Pope" there was an absence of the kindly feeling and the mutual interchange of courtesies which Sir James in Sarawak had been anxious to see established with Labuan. The appointment of Henry Bulwer as the next governor was hailed with relief. The people of Labuan welcomed the appointment and the *Sarawak Gazette* hoped that the advent of the new Governor would be the means of securing unity of purpose and common endeavour for the interest of trade and civilization on the north west coast of Borneo. There existed only two settlements, Sarawak and Labuan, and they ought to work together.

The governorship of the "Pope" lasted three years. Henry Bulwer succeeded him in 1871.

The Governor in those early days had a small council to advise him. The council was composed of executive officers who were subordinate to him, and whether he followed their advice or not was for himself to determine.

The Governor wielded the widest powers, being out of touch with London except by mails carried by sea, and amenable to no local criticism.

According to the Governor's will a condemned man might be put to death or reprieved. He granted pardons according to his own judgment or caprice. The whole of the taxation system was in his hands. He made grants of land like a Norman King. He issued laws like a Solon. He rewarded or punished like a Caliph.

When reproached for acting contrary to the law, he could exclaim, "The law! I am the law!" And he would have been almost right.

CHAPTER 6

COALING DAYS

COAL was worked by mining companies in Labuan for sixty five years, from about 1847 to 1911. At its best the output was 5000 tons a week.

Although mining companies went into bankruptcy one after the other, yet there was always another ready to put in more capital.

Apart from mining problems at the sea level there was the eternal problem of labour. Discontent was rife, and an old Indian watchman who retired to Lobak Temiang close to the mine held lively memories of the disturbances, strikes and riots which persisted to the very last day of the mine's existence.

Labourers from Brunei and Malaya earned what money they needed and returned home. Indentured labourers worked their term and convicts served their sentences: all returned home. None would stay. This was partly due to malarial fever whose cause was not known in those days. Family life and amenities were lacking Inefficiency and mismanagement, opium and gambling, also played their part.

Another difficulty was the lack of suitable wharfage for big ships. The coaling wharf occupied the site of the present shipping wharf

nd a railway ran from the mines to it. The ubble wall of the present shipping wharf dates ack to coaling days. Only medium sized ships ould approach.

From the beginning open-cast working had been allowed and the open-casts acted as funnels which collected rain water and poured it down the mine. The rainfall amounts to about one hundred inches a year so pumping costs were high. Water was always in front of the miners. The coal seams were steep. Some of the seams were worked under the sea.

The first of the coal mining companies was the Eastern Archipelago Company of 1847. Henry Wise of London was managing director and the first colliery manager in Labuan was Mr Sinclair, whose assistant and surgeon was Dr Coulthard. In those early days a miner and smelter who engaged in Scotland for service in Labuan was paid £16, £18 and £20 a month in three successive years. He could improve his position and earn £40 a month as an assistant.

Relations between Sir James Brooke and the Eastern Archipelago Company soon became strained over a variety of affairs. Henry Wise made attacks on Sir James. Angered by these persistent charges against him, Sir James prosecuted the company for fraud and won his case. The suit was tried in London and the court found the coal company guilty of fraud and "a gross abuse and misnomer of the privileges granted by their charter." The offence of which the company was proved guilty was that when they

possessed a capital of only £5000 and purchased a mine on credit, which they themselves valued at £46,000, they certified to the Board of Trade that they had £50,000 of paid up capital which was quite untrue. As a result the Eastern Archipelago Company lost the concession.

The mines at Labuan and Brooketon on the main land formed a close link. For a time all the mines whether in Labuan, Brunei or Sarawak were under the same company's management. When Sir James Brooke resigned the Governorship of Labuan he was free to take an interest in the mines. Disputes were often sent to him for settlement. He kept a private house in Labuan for many years. It was called "Cool Fin" and a house still stands upon the site. It is a mile or more from the port along Plain Road and stands on a slope near where the hills come down to the shore. Sir James brought his own sago attaps from Limbang for the roof and refused shingles or tiles as being too hot. The first house was a long low house and not as cool as its name sounds. From this house Sir James kept supervision over his own affairs, including the mines. After his death the house was sold to Mr Doherty for the sum of $3000 and the new owner pulled it down and built the present smaller house on the same site.

Some of the companies which succeeded the Eastern Archipelago Company had equally grandiloquent names. There was the modest Labuan Coal, then the Amalgamated China

Steamship and Labuan Coal, and then the Oriental Coal.

One of these companies did things on a big scale.

The company sent to Labuan four finest eamers to carry the coal from Labuan to Singapore, but something was wrong at the colliery and the output was small. The Colliery Manager decided to use these steamers to carry other cargo, but this did not prove a success because the steamers were built for carrying coal and were unsuited for the mixed cargoes of Borneo. They had no accommodation for deck or saloon passengers. In his difficulty the Colliery Manager asked Captain Ross to take over the steamers and manage them at a salary. Captain Ross refused the offer and the Colliery Manager used threats. His four steamers could run *Don Pedro* out of business, he said. Captain Ross however could not be persuaded and sailed out of Labuan for Singapore with *Don Pedro* loaded as deep as it was safe to load her. Every cabin was booked and the decks swarmed with deck passengers. A coal company's steamer sailed at the same time with a few hundred tons of coal mined on the surface in a hurry, but the voyage did not pay the cost of mining the coal.

Once when Captain Ross visited the colliery he found the engineer in charge of the railway sick with fever and the engineer in charge of the pumps engaged with a bottle of brandy and two local ladies. The main shaft was full of water.

There were frequent changes in the management and unkind observers said that each successive manager reversed his predecessor's policy and ordered from England a new set of machinery.

One manager ordered an extensive plant for distilling shale oil, but it never went further than the beach, as the new manager said that though there was shale in the island it required another million years for its formation before anybody could get oil out of it. It was a new formation and the other man's geology was all wrong.

Captain Ross was told to load the whole thing on his *Don Pedro* and sell it for what it would fetch in Singapore. What it fetched did not pay the cost of the freight.

The railway from Port Victoria to the colliery followed a track which is now McArthur Road. The railway was about eight miles long and tickets were issued to passengers to travel up and down the line. But the Colliery Manager would not sell tickets to passengers whom he did not like, and on one occasion when a gentleman on the black list entered a carriage with a ticket bought by somebody else, the Colliery Manager challenged him to descend from the train and fight to settle the point. The other passengers were delighted.

The island was not big enough to hold men of such fiery temper. They met too often. Suits for libel and slander were frequent and one case of libel went as far as London. (Archibald Allison vs Borneo Co. Ltd., Queens Bench

Division, 1890). Lawyers often came up from Singapore and earned good fees. Feelings ran high.

In 1890 when the Chartered Company took over the administration of Labuan, the coal mines were still unsuccessful. In that year Walter Clutterbuck, a tourist, described the scene. The coal company's offices at the coast were in a large bare whitewashed brick building which was also used as a rest house for those with business to transact. It was a most inhospitable place and stood at the shore end of the present wharf. The hotel in the town was a ramshackle wooden building with an *attap* roof. Drinks and meals could be got there.

The railway to the Colliery was working and passengers going to the mine sat in a shabby car hooked on to a long string of trucks returning empty.

The Colliery Manager lived at Coal Point at the north end of the island. His house was roomy and comfortable with a dusty and neglected look about it. At the Colliery dozens of Malay mandores wandered about dressed in white jackets and trousers and their chief duty was to stir the miners to action with a short length of cane. The Engineer in charge of the pumps lived several miles away because his wife did not like the mines.

The stock of explosives was kept in the Manager's house for safety, but Malays and others soon found a way to get in and take the ten-pound kegs of gunpowder. Gunpowder was in great demand by hunters of game and heads on the mainland for their muzzle-loaders. These weapons were called

Tower muskets and dated from the Crimean war. They were smooth in bore and went out of use in Europe soon after rifling was discovered. They served hunters in Borneo up to about 1910 and reached the furthest *kampongs*. Safeguarding the gunpowder store in the coal mine was a problem.

Relations between the Colliery Manager and the Resident in the days of Chartered Company's rule were not always cordial. The Colliery Manager during one of his visits to Victoria was much disturbed by the bugle calls of Sikh soldiers whose barracks were near to the coal company's offices. He took some foolscap paper and wrote officially to the Resident demanding that he should forthwith order his rabble of heathens to cease their discordant blasts on brazen trumpets, which deafened the ears of a Christian gentleman, the Colliery Manager, upon whose ability and undisturbed exercise of his faculties the prosperity of the entire colony depended. He covered a page or two of foolscap and despatched it to the Residency, as Government House was then called. The Resident threw the screed to one side and thought no more about it.

The Colliery Manager bided his time and affixed a powerful steam siren which he got off the wreck of a ship to one of the locomotives on the railway. The railway described a curve at the back of the Residency, where McArthur Road lies today. The Manager ran his locomotive to this curve, and set a full head of steam blowing continuously through the siren. The hootings of

this appalling contrivance began at dinner time and were kept up throughout the whole of one hideous night.

Messengers, and indeed the Resident himself, went in vain to the Colliery Manager's house in town to beg him to stop the blood-curdling shrieks of his steam siren. All alike were informed that the Manager was asleep and had given strict orders that he was not to be disturbed.

His doors and windows were well bolted and barred. Noone thought it was worth while to break into the house and get at him, and it was learned later that the Manager was sleeping blissfully in his bungalow at the north end of the island. The Manager obstinately maintained his right to do what he liked on his own railway. In the end the sleepless Resident capitulated and promised that the bugles of his Sikhs should remain silent while the Manager was in town.

The Colliery Manager decided on the building of labourers' quarters near the offices which would provide clean and comfortable quarters for his labourers in place of common lodging-houses in town where they were fleeced. Miners were induced to shift to the new quarters, and lodging-house crimps in town were furious at the thought of losing their gains. The crimps decided to burn the new lines.

The foreman at the mines was well aware of this and determined to prevent it. He said he could guarantee the capture and punishment of the crimps. He asked the Colliery Manager to visit the new lines at ten o'clock the same night.

He was warned not to come too early lest he frighten the crimps away.

The foreman came to meet him with a grin on his face.

"Its all right, sir," said the foreman. "We've got them!"

In the midst of a shouting and milling mob of people there sat half a dozen sulky-looking ruffians. In front of them lay a small pile of damar torches, rags soaked in paraffin and boxes of matches. There were also some ropes and a dozen stout rattan canes cut neatly into lengths of about four feet.

"Here they are!" cheerfully said the foreman, pointing to the group squatting on their hunkers. "Better give them a good thrashing and let them go. That will end the thing, but if the police come to arrest them there will be a fight and someone will get hurt. May we flog them?"

The Colliery Manager nodded his head, which was taken for consent. Eager hands loosened the knots which pinioned the arms of the crimps, stripped them of every rag of clothing and bound each of them to a cocount tree. There was a squabble about who should have the honour of flogging them, but once this dispute was settled no time was lost. The rattan canes whistled through the air and cut into the flesh of the sufferers who yelled horribly.

In vain did the Manager shout to the foreman and others to stop, and it was only by his own exertions that he could cast off the ropes of each in turn. They were then huddled into their

clothes and flung out of the main gateway where their friends picked them up and carried them home.

The Manager got a list of the names of the crimps and thought it best to report the affair to the Resident the same night. He rode on a pony, late as it was, to lay information against them. He found the Resident lying in a long chair and lightly clad in the singlet and sarong of a hot climate.

"Come and have a drink, my friend," said the Resident. "You ride late to-night! Anything up?"

The Manager refreshed himself with a much needed whisky and soda, and then told the Resident about the row at the labourers' quarters.

"Well I'm damned!" shouted the angry Resident. "You go and have a lot of people flogged and then come to tell *me* about it. What's the good of the Resident and police if you take the law into your own hands when it suits you? While you're here I'm no more Resident of Labuan than I am Emperor of Japan."

The men discussed the position from an opportunist point of view. To prosecute the Manager would never do. Much better arrest the crimps on a charge of incendiarism and if they had been badly hurt put them in the prison hospital where the Medical officer could look after them.

"It's very awkward," said the Resident. These crimps have a lot of money. Hugh St

John, the lawyer, will take up the case and you can't blame him if he does."

Hugh St John on behalf of the crimps brought actions both civil and criminal against the Manager, and that led to the trial of the crimps first. Each of the crimps was tried in turn and condemned to serve a sentence in the chain gang until there was a steamer by which he could be deported. Nothing came of the actions against the Manager.

Trouble was present at the colliery so long as secret societies existed. They were common. Members met in secret and favoured anarchy in various ways The societies were outlawed, but still continued. At last the Colliery Manager got even with them. A spy brought him information and having learned wisdom he took the Resident into his confidence. The Manager had his own body of police. They were Sikhs and the Manager thought them much more efficient than the Chartered Company's. The two forces joined together one sultry night under the Resident and they found a meeting being held in a secret retreat hidden away in the recesses of an abandoned mine. The police rushed in and caught eighteen members by surprise. They were arrested, handcuffed and sent by a special train to Victoria where they were put into prison. A pile of papers and arms and dynamite stolen from the store were captured, together with the symbols and badges usually associated with a secret society of this sort.

The Resident was jubilant. "When you leave things to me," was the burden of his song to the Manager, "see how beautifully it is done. No noise! no flogging! no nothing!"

Sports and fun played a large part in life in those days and when s.s. *St Pancras* was wrecked near Labuan her crew of forty men were brought safely ashore and the people entertained then with goodwill. Sports and games were organised and the Colliery Manager of the day excelled his record at the high jump, when he jumped himself clean out of the seat of his breeches to the great amusement of the crowd.

Labuan Club was a lively meeting place, but conditions at the Government Rest House were not so amicable. It was about a mile and a half out of the town on the plateau close to the houses of officials of the Government and of the Coal Company. Its site was just beyond old Government House which is now a park. From this Rest House many visitors and people living in the island were excluded, partly by personal animosity and partly by official displeasure. These resorted to a popular hotel kept by J. P. Keasberry in the town.

Meanwhile the coal trade continued to decline, generations of optimistic shareholders lost their money and one coal company after another went into liquidation. The coal carrying steamers were transferred to the China coast as a separate concern and in the end the Germans bought up the whole fleet and transferred them to the German flag.

Other ships carried cargoes of coal until about the year 1911 when the mines were closed.

The day of oil fuel had dawned.

Large deposits are still underground, it is said, and more than one inspection has been made since the mines were closed. Little can be seen at the site except the track to the mine and the brick chimney.

Is Labuan the coal island of Samburan which Joseph Conrad has written about in his book Victory? The book is a story of adventure in an island with coal near Borneo and its identity is hidden in the name Samburan. The story centres on a coalmines — an unsucessful mine.

The book "Victory" appeared in 1915, a generation ago. Conrad himself said that it was written in the years before the first world war, was completed a month or two before the war broke out, and received its name as a token of the future victory which he felt sure would be achieved. "Victory" does not seem nowadays to be a suitable name for a story about an island near Borneo, unless it points to Port Victoria.

Which island did Conrad describe in this book? Was it Labuan?

The question was discussed at some lenght in the press in 1954, in *Kinabalu* Magazine of January and again in *North Borneo News* of 21st January. The writers of the articles agreed that Labuan could not fulfill all the geographical

and social features which Conrad attached to his island, but they could suggest no other island. The pros and cons were listed.

For Labuan, the list in favour is fairly long. The island of Conrad's story lies within radius of eight hundred miles of the north point of Borneo. Coal is plentiful in that circle and Heyst, the coal company promoter, chose an island as the central point.

Victory, the name of the Book, brings to mind Victoria, the name of Labuan's port.

The coal company in the book is called the Tropical Belt Coal Company and that is suspiciously like the Eastern Archipelago Coal Company of Labuan

Cosmopolitan people cross the pages of the book, in character very like early adventurers in Labuan.

Schomberg is a character in the book, and in Labuan there lived Carl Schomburgk, a close friend of Captain Ross and William Cowie, all three being partners in the Labuan Trading Company.

The loss of capital in the coalmine, the description of the abandoned railway and offices, the lines festooned with creepers, the empty bungalows and the mists of heat and stilness which shrouded the path across Samburan are all reminiscent of Labuan.

Against Labuan the list would include Conrad's description of the island as being a round island, and of a volcano being in sight from the island. Moreover the atmosphere of social life in

Samburan is Dutch East Indian, illustrating life in a second class hotel with abundant orchestral music. The reader of Victory feels that he is under the Dutch flag rather than the British. These features seem to exclude Labuan.

Quoting the writer of the article in *North Borneo News*, lovers of Conrad, particularly those familiar with the seas where he sailed are naturally inclined to puzzle their brains about the location of this or that place, or the prototype of this or that character, but surely this is love's labour lost, for Conrad was careful to veil their identity. Conrad himself said of his writings:—

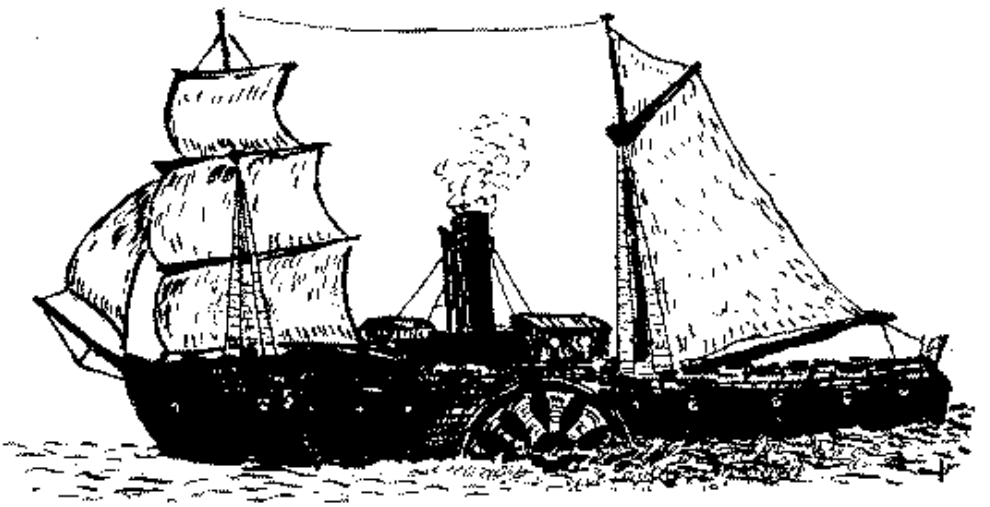
"As you know, I do not write history, but fiction, and I am therefore entitled to choose as as I please what is most suitable in regard to characters and particulars."

There is no evidence that Conrad ever visited Labuan. He visited Banjermassin and Kutei, and Bulongan and Berau south of Tawau. All those places lie in what was Dutch Borneo. In the 1880's Conrad was s ship's officer on s.s. *Vidar* sailing out of Singapore to trade with southern Borneo and the Celebes. He served on *Vidar* for five months. Later he was mate on another ship s.s. *Torrens*. Conrad must have heard often of Labuan when chatting with his friends in Singapore or on board ship. Perhaps in writing Victory he had more than one island in mind and Samburan may be a composite island.

CHAPTER 7

SAIL AND STEAM

ONE disappointments of those who persistently looked at Labuan through rose-tinted glasses was the failure of shipping lines to advance from sail to steam, although coal was mined on the island. Kuching, some four hundred miles from Labuan, had enjoyed a regular and efficient steamer service with Singapore since 1856. A further twenty years passed before a steamer was put on the run between Singapore and Labuan.



A paddle steamer

The shipowner doing the best trade invested his money to promote his business indirectly. He bought up shop property in Labuan to such an extent that nearly all the shop-houses in the little

town belonged to him. His tenants kept on good terms with their landlord. If a trader in the town wished to open a sago factory or deal in jungle produce, the shipowner would lend him money at a rate of interest which was thought to be cheap in those days. He would charge twelve per cent a year with a three-year agreement that the trader must ship his cargo on the shipowner's vessels. The shipowner on his side promised to find enough tonnage for all requirements and everybody was satisfied.

Trade between Labuan and Singapore increased and Captain Ross soon found that *Don Pedro* was not big enough. This ship was sold and a fine new ship called *Samson* took her place. *Samson* was a full rigged sailing ship and became very popular.

A hindrance was the dead calm which sometimes occurs in Labuan waters. On a fair wind *Samson* would run between Labuan and Singapore in six days, but there were voyages when she would take six weeks to drift the distance.

On one occasion Captain Ross gave a dinner party on board *Samson* for men only. When the time came for the party to go ashore Dr McPhun went first and in his hilarious state he saw two gangways. He chose the imaginary instead of wooden one and fell into the sea with a loud splash. Major Barclay, who had come from Singapore on one of his gunnery inspections, looked over the side.

"The old Doctor is floating all right. He is too fat to sink," said the Major complacently.

"Yes," replied Captain Ross looking over the rail, "But he's floating the wrong side up!" He rescured the doctor just in time.

Changing into a dry suit, Captain Ross joined some of his other guests, one of them was Captain Barkspur of H M.S. *Sharpshooter.* She was a surveying ship and Captain Ross knew Captain Barkspur well and had been of much help to him in his surveys. Captain Barkspur got ready at midnight to return to his warship and asked Captain Ross if he could take any letters to Singapore on *Sharpshooter.*

"I wish you would take me as a passenger!" said Captain Ross.

"What? take you on board as a passenger?"

"No! I did not quite mean that. It's dead calm and the sea is like a sheet of glass. Goodness only knows when *Samson* will reach Singapore. If you would only give my vessel a friendly tow across, it would help a lot."

At first Captain Barkspur said the thing was impossible. "Whoever heard of a warship doing such a thing?" he asked. But as they went on calking, the idea seemed a little less ridiculous than at first and finally Captain Barkspur tonsented. The party broke up and each went to his bunk.

Next morning Captain Barkspur, after a few hours of sleep, was awakened by an unusual bustle and tramping overhead. He rang a bell and sent a marine to find out what cause of the unseemly noise and bid it stop instantly. The

marine returned to say that it was only Captain Ross bending his cables.

The Captain of H M.S. *Sharpshooter* admitted sorrowfully to hin self that he was suffering from a fat head, the result of too much champagne and several brandies and sodas. Too many cheroots also perhaps. He jumped into his uniform and hastened on deck where he found Captain Ross fresh as paint gazing with a satisfied smile at a couple of fine new Manila hawsers fastened to H.M.S. *Sharpshooter's* bits.

"What's the meaning of this?" roared Captain Barkspur.

"Well," quietly answered Captain Ross, "Mr Shovels, your chief engineer, said you might be getting under weigh very shortly, so I thought I would get everything ready for the tow."

"Tow!"

"Yes, why not? You're going to tow my *Samson* to Singapore aren't you? You promised so last night!"

The Captain of H M S. *Sharpshooter* said something he regretted afterwards as unbecoming a naval officer and a gentleman. Captain Ross turned to Lieutenant Simpson.

"I say, Simpson, you heard Captain Barkspur promise last night that he would give me a tow, didn't you?"

Lieutenant Simpson had been one of the guests on board *Samson* and had listened to the talk of the two captains with some surprise. He now turned rather red in the face and said that he believed Capt. Ross had stated the facts correctly.

"Then that settles the matter," said Captain Ross.

But Captain Barkspur promptly retorted that he wanted the hawsers taken off his quarter deck, as he intended to leave for Singapore at once. Captain Barkspur could show a fine sense of the meaning of words and left no doubt about his intention.

"Do you really think I am going to tow that outrageous old East Indiaman of yours all the way from Labuan to Singapore?"

He looked angrily at the towering masts and spars of *Samson* just astern of him, and gave vent to explosive language.

Captain Ross took out a spotless clean white handkerchief and wiped imaginary tears from his eyes and nose. He expressed in simple words his unbroken faith in Captain Barkspur's word.

"This comes of dining with merchant skippers!" growled Captain Barkspur. "I've got a head on me like a toy shop and I've got to tow this monstrous windjammer from Labuan to Jerusalem!"

They both went below to taste a hair of the dog.

"Mind you," said Captain Barkspur, feeling better, I'll cast you off at Horsburgh Light. I'll not go into Singapore with that thing fastened to my tail."

Two hours later people came down to see H.M.S. *Sharpshooter* off. She steamed out, and to everybody's surprise *Samson* astern of her strained at a tow line and glided away through a crystal sea without a stitch of canvas set.

By custom of the day, discipline on board the sailing vessels was maintained by the lash On the last voyage of *Samson* from Singapore to Labuan many of the crew proved to be an undesirable sort. No doubt the *ghaut serang* had taken on a number of bad characters. Discipline fell to pieces and the vessel was sailed in careless fashion. Thefts and fighting amongst the sailors led to trouble.

To the master of any ship this sort of thing was intolerable and on the next occasion that trouble occurred on board, Captain Ross had half a dozen of his wasters soundly flogged. The culprits were made fast to the rigging by their wrists, and Kassim with two assistants flogged them in turn with a rope called a colt. This was a short length of rope tightly wound with twine and beeswax and terminating in a pointed end. This colt could hurt a great deal without causing much damage. The allotted number of lashes having been inflicted by Kassim and his mates, the culprits were cast off and sent below.

But this was not the end of the trouble. That same night *Samson* was doing five or six knots in fine weather with a moderate breeze and Captain

Ross was pacing his quarter-deck when some Malay sailors made a sudden rush at him. He knocked down two of them, but a knife flashed and in a moment he was lying on the deck. The mutineers' plan was to throw the Captain overboard, but they were slow in lifting such a heavy man.

Mrs Ross was on board and she always kept a watchful eye on her husband's safety. The mutineers had lifted the Captain level with the rail and one more heave would have had him overboard, but in that moment Mrs Ross flung herself through the mutineers and falling with her own elephantine weight upon the Captain bore him to the deck again, and sat upon him.

Mr Jenkins, the mate, drew a pistol, and shot one of the mutineers dead. Pointing the pistol, he cowed the other ruffians who allowed themselves to be put in irons without resistance.

The Captain was carried to his cabin where his wound was discovered to be a gash across his forehead which was cut to the bone.

The wound however was not so serious as to prevent him from punishing the mutineers. Kassim and his two mates set to work on them in the usual style, and on this occasion with a will They would have flogged the mutineers to death if the Captain had not interfered and put an end to the punishment. The mutineers were not worth much when they were cut down from their seizings and carried below.

On arrival at Labuan, they were handed over to the police for trial and were sentenced to some

years of hard labour which in those days meant that the punishment would be served in a chain-gang working on the roads of the island.

At last, about 1876, the first steamer on the regular run between Singapore and Labuan appeared. She was s s. *Alastor*. She was twenty years old when she came out.

Alfred Holt had bought *Alastor* and she was the pioneer of that great fleet of Blue Funnel ships trading under Holt's flag all over the world. Alfred Holt cut *Alastor* in two, put his own system of tandem engines into her and sent her out from Liverpool to the east by way of Cape of Good Hope. Later with the opening of Suez Canal and improvement in ship-design s.s. *Alastor* became out of date for long voyages. Alfred Holt sold her in Singapore and she went cheap to Captain Ross who bought her for the Labuan trade.

S.S. *Alastor* had a clipper bow, was heavily masted and sparred. She had engines, but looked like a sailing ship.

There is a description of her arrival once in Singapore. By that time Captain Ross no longer took his own ships to sea, and he waited on the pier at Singapore to greet her.

The long black hull of s s. *Alastor* lay so low in the water that she almost seemed to be sinking. Five European passengers went ashore from her to the Hotel del Europe and Captain Ross learned from the master that he had shut out three thousand bags of sago and one hundred bullocks at Labuan.

The cargo of s s. *Alastor* contained monkeys, parrots, rattans and getah percha.

S.S. *Alastor* paid for herself two or three times over, and new boilers were put into her. She served about twenty years on the Labuan run and earned a lot of money before her career closed.

Concession hunters began to appear. In particular an American named Charles L. Moses seemed to have some chance of success.

In 1850 Sultan Omar Ali had signed a treaty giving the United States the privileges of the most favoured nation, and the United States had done nothing about it for fifteen years. Then at long last Charles Moses arrived in Labuan in 1865.

Whether Charles Moses came as a Consul of the United States or merely as an adventurer was in doubt.

Little escaped the sharp eyes of the British officials ashore in Labuan and it was noticed that Charles Moses had to borrow money in Labuan to pay for his fare from Singapore. But he acted swiftly. Within a few days of his arrival in Brunei he got a concession from Sultan Abdul Mumin, on mere promises to pay, of large areas of land on the west coast of North Borneo as a lease for ten years, and moreover his lease was renewable. His success caused a flutter in the dove-cots in Labuan, where traders watched with wondering eyes his departure for Hong Kong with cession papers in his pocket. The British Consul in Sarawak reported to the Foreign Office

in London that Charles Moses had provided for American possession of some fine harbours, such as Gaya, Ambong and Marudu Bay.

The Americans might absorb all North Borneo and even Brunei itself. Fortunately Charles Moses soon showed his hand. He was out for himself, not for Uncle Sam. Charles Moses sold his concession in Hong Kong as swiftly as he had bought it to two American traders and two Chinese who styled themselves the American Trading Company of Borneo, and prepared to found a colony.

In November 1865 the pioneer party sailed from Hong Kong on their new venture. The names of the men who organised this enterprise were Joseph W. Torrey and Thomas B. Harris, Americans, and Lee Ah Sing and Pong Am Pong, Chinese. The capital was $HK 7000, provided by the Chinese, for the Americans were dollarless, hard though it is to believe a century later.

The partnership of these two Americans and two Chinese formed a government. They were rulers as well as traders. They agreed with Charles Moses, he being United States Consul in Brunei, that he should protect the new colony under the Stars and Stripes in return for one-third of the profits and Charles Moses in return stipulated that the only flag to be hoisted should be the Stars and Stripes and that the laws of the United States should apply.

Kimanis River was chosen as the site of the colony about fifty miles from Labuan. Joseph

Torrey was appointed Supreme Ruler and Governor. His title was His Excelleny the Rajah of Ambong and Marudu, showing how far afield the colony was expected to extend. From Sultan Abdul Mumin he received yet another title, Sir Maharajah of North Borneo. A party of sixty Chinese and ten Americans formed the pioneer party. The colony was named Ellena, and was established in December 1865.

The settlement was not a success. The capital was insufficient, and Chinese traders in Labuan were asked to make advances. The settlement languished, and when Joseph Torrey returned to Hong Kong to raise more funds, one of his Labuan creditors pursued him there.

Joseph Torrey never returned from Hong Kong. The labourers drifted over sea to Labuan, where they got work in the coal mines.

The sole memorial of this ill-fated attempt is the lonely grave of Thomas Harris whose tomb-stone stands on a hill on Kimanis Estate. The hill is about 350 feet high commanding extensive views of the coast. The epitaph commemorates Thomas Harris, and keeps the colony in memory. It reads:—

In Memory of
Thomas Bradley Harris
Late Hon. Chief Secretary in the Colony of
AMBONG and MAROODU
By birth a citizen of the U.S.A.
Died 22nd May 1866
aged 40 years
Erected by H.E. the Rajah as a tribute of respect to the
memory of an old faithful and esteemed friend
"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well"

The Rajah was of course Torrey.

The settlement survived for a year and at the end of 1866 it died out.

Charles Moses was not yet beaten. He tried to raise money again in Labuan but failed, and went back to Brunei. Then sending his family to Labuan, he set fire to his consulate in Brunei and claimed a large sum from Sultan Abdul Mumin as compensation. The Sultan refused to pay anything at all, not even when U.S.S. *Monocacy*, a gunboat, arrived in Brunei to enquire into the affair. Charles Moses' end came when the Captain of the American warship decided that there was no case to press. Charles Moses sailed from Labuan in 1867, and shortly after, it is said, lost his life at sea on a voyage to his home in America. The Sultan never received a single cent from either Charles Moses or Joseph Torrey throughout the whole business.

The Governor in Labuan had kept a watchful eye on the activities of the American Trading Company and the Foreign Office was fully informed of events. The United States had informed the British Government that Charles Moses in securing the concession was acting purely on his own authority, but there is evidence that Uncle Sam sought to get hold of Banggi as a naval base, and pegged away at this scheme for several years.

Other visitors to Labuan about this time were Italians. In February 1870 Labuan was surprised by the arrival of an Italian warship, *Prinipessa*

Clotilde, Captain Racchia. He said he had orders to search for a suitable site for a penal settlement for Italian convicts. He had examined the coast opposite Labuan and thought that Gaya Bay would do excellently. It was the finest anchorage in north-west Borneo. The Italian scheme was to form a transit camp in Gaya for criminals awaiting transhipment to Banggi Island where the penal settlement would be founded.

The "Pope", then Governor of Labuan, protested to Captain Rachhia that a penal settlement in Gaya or Banggi would corrupt the morals of the people of Brunei, as if that were possible! Father Cuarteron's mission at Menggatal would be no match for that amount of mischief. The "Pope" referred the matter to London and a long correspondence began between London and Rome. Three years later, in 1873, the government of Italy gave up the scheme. The criminals of Italy were not to be shipped overseas, but kept at home.

People of Jesselton, who now disport themselves on the sands of Tanjong Aru, sail yachts in Gaya Bay and picnic on Gaya Island may like to reflect on the possibility of their pleasure grounds having become a depot for criminal Italians.

Years passed and with the lapse of time the cession granted for ten years to Charles Moses became due to expire. Joseph Torrey must have reached despair when he met that forceful person Baron Overbeck. He was the Austrian Consul in Hong Kong, and he decided that Joseph Torrey's concession was of value. He was

prepared to put up £2000, and two of his friends one in London and the other in Vienna were to add £1000 each. They were to take over the cession from Joseph Torrey, who then became much more hopeful, but another blow fell.

An Austrian warship dropped anchor in Labuan harbour. Her Captain called on Lieutenant Governor Hugh Low, and asked him about the prospects and position of the American Trading Company. The Lieutenant Governor informed the Austrian Captain that no such company then existed. Thus Hugh Low tripped up the enterprising Austrian Consul, and the warship reported back to Vienna

The news spread in Vienna and the Baron's friends backed out of the scheme. The Baron himself was bolder. He returned to Hong Kong and offered to buy Joseph Torrey out for $HK 15,000 on condition that a renewal of the cession could be got within nine months. Together they sailed to Labuan and thence to Brunei. Their avowed intention was to occupy the northern coasts of Borneo. Sultan Abdul Mumin refused to renew the cession and could not be tempted by any offers. The Sultan was acting on the advice of Hugh Low, who again tripped up the Baron. But even so the Baron was not defeated. He turned to the heir. The young prince was entitled Pangeran Tumonggong, and he renewed the cession in defiance of his old father for the paltry sum of $1000. The old Sultan refused to affix his seal and Hugh Low regarded the decument as worthless. However

Baron Overbeck and Joseph Torrey had to be content and the pair of cession hunters returned to Hong Kong with it. As will appear later they thought their new cession covered practically the whole of what is now North Borneo, excepting only Labuan. In spite of Hugh Low they thought they held the prize. But once again fate intervened. Baron Overbeck had not yet paid the price to Joseph Torrey, who still enjoyed the grandiloquent title of Rajah of Ambong and Marudu, with as he thought, the addition of Sandakan.

Then it was that Joseph Torrey came into contact with William Clark Cowie, a Scot.

The impact of the arrival of William Clark Cowie in Labuan had a great and far reaching influence on the future history of North Borneo.

William Cowie was a young engineer, when he cast his eyes towards the east. He sailed out of Glasgow with four friends in s.s. *Angyle* an iron steamer of fourteen tons The voyage to Singapore lasted five months, and the ship only just reached port. For the last month, the five friends lived on rice and treacle. No matches were left and they kept a kind of vestal fire burning in the galley which they tried to keep alight, and when by ill-chance it did go out, they could only get it alight again with the help of a cartridge, an old gun and some jute. The other men went off to various jobs and William Cowie gave his attention to trade and adventure in the pirate-infested seas around Borneo. He reached Labuan which he made headquarters and was

commissioned to run the blockade into the Philippines.

The Spaniards, rulers of the Philippines, were trying to overcome the antagonism of the Muslim people in the southern islands, who are known generally as Moros. The Spaniards had tried to conquer these people for the past three hundred years without lasting success. William Cowie was told to supply cargoes of arms, ammunition and other contraband to these Moros in the Sulu Islands.

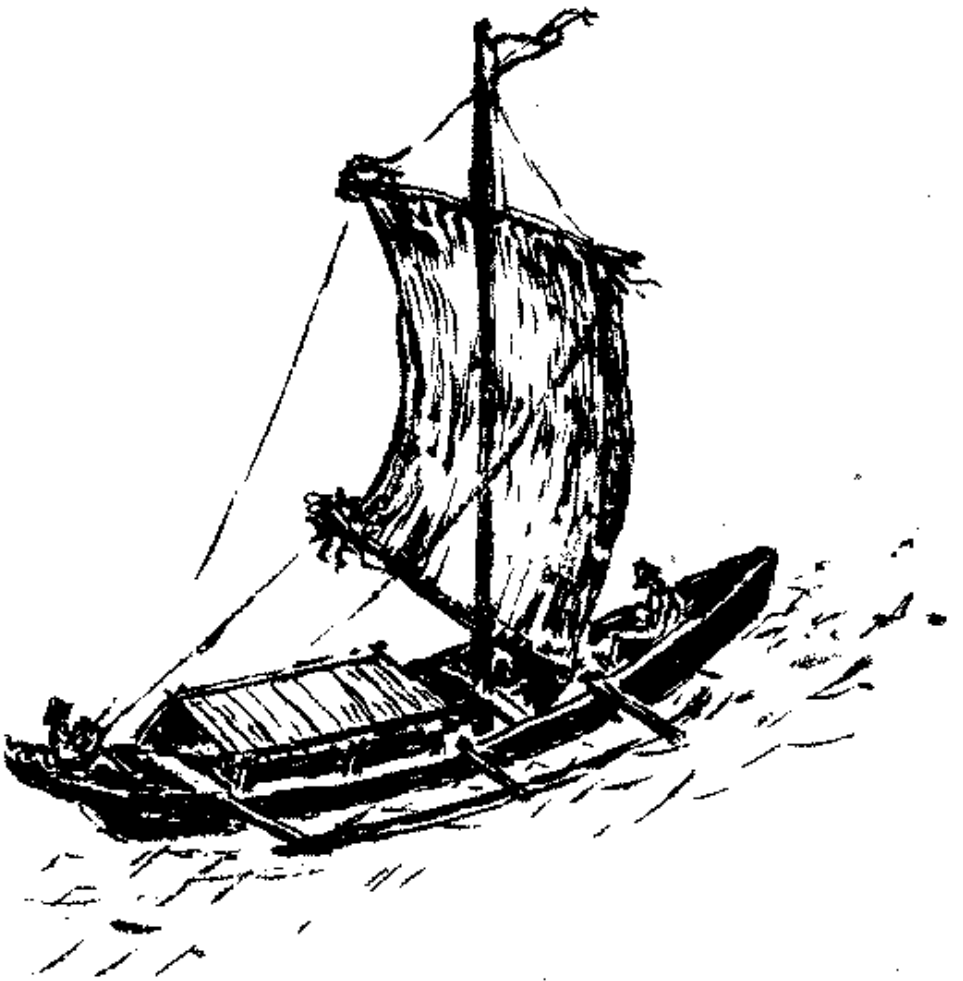
The Spaniards knew of the blockade runners through up-to-date information sent by their agent.

Gun-running is not a drawing-room pastime, says Owen Rutter in his book "British North Borneo". There are civilised people who would call it by hard names, but it is at all events a man's game, needing nerve, courage and resources, all of which virtues William Cowie possessed to a remarkable degree.

The firm which financed the blockade-running was a Singapore firm. William Cowie was appointed to be their Manager in Borneo, where the firm called itself the Labuan Trading Company. The ships belonging to the firm were steamships and plied in and out of Labuan. Their Captains were British and German.

The information which Father Cuareton sent to the Spanish authorities caused other British and German captains to be taken and their cargoes confiscated, but thanks to the caution and vigilance of the Scot, the ships and cargoes of the Labuan

Trading Company were never caught. They went scot-free as it were. Blockade-running was a paying game and brought much profit to the partnership, in spite of both pirates and Spaniards who lay in wait.

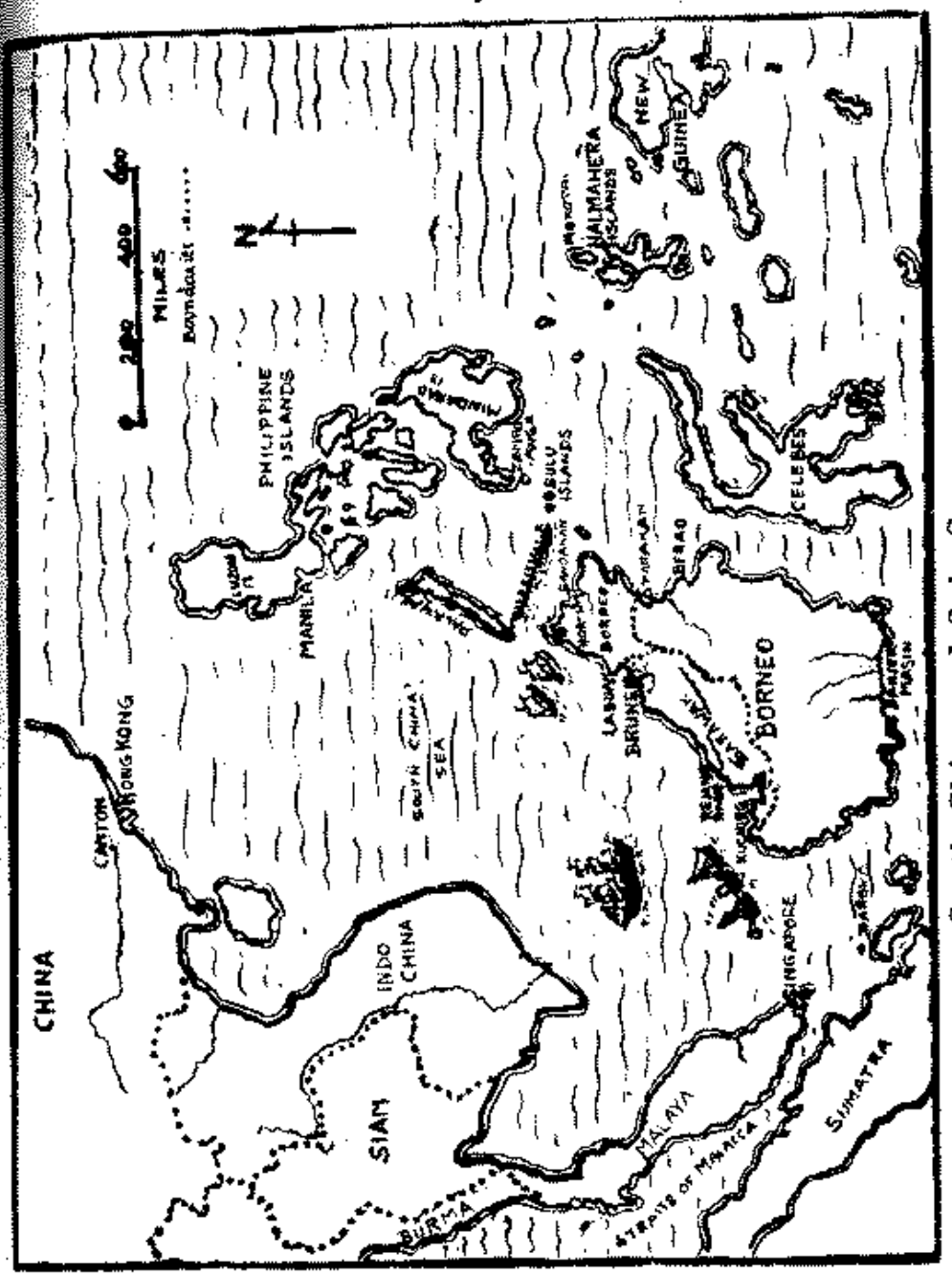


A dapang with outrigger in the Sulu Sea.

On his first voyage out of Labuan, William Cowie's Captain had brought his ship, s.s. *Far East*, safely through the blockade and anchored her in Jolo, a port in the Sulu Islands He had

just finished discharging his cargo when a Spanish gunboat came up. William Cowie coaded capture by playing an international bluff. *Far East's* papers were partly in Malay and partly in Dutch. At her mast she flew a Malay flag. One of the ship's owners was a German. The mate was a Scot and the ship's master's certificate was English. She had sailed out of Labuan, a British port. William Cowie played this international game for all it was worth, and the Spanish commander thought there were too many nations to get entangled with. He gave the ship two hours to get steam up and quit the port. As both might and right were on the side of the Spanish warship, William Cowie did not dispute the order, and took on board in the short time allowed him as much as he could of the cargo of mother-of-pearl offered him in payment of his cargo of arms. He put to sea as ordered but he would not admit defeat. His ship steamed into the Sulu Sea for several hours, and when night fell she steamed back to Jolo, laid up in a creek until the gunboat had gone about her business and then slipped back into port. She loaded the rest of the precious mother-of-pearl under cover of darkness and got clean away before dawn broke. She was bound for Labuan, but she had to fight her way.

Far East was steaming past the north point of Borneo named Simpang Mengayu, meaning the pirates' parting of the ways, when a fleet of one hundred warboats gave chase. William Cowie had sold all his round shot in Jolo, but his ship



South China and Sulu Seas

still had her guns, and some powder was left. He and his Captain and crew cut up the anchor chain into short lengths to make into shot. In good wind a pirate warboat could outsail most

steamers of those days, and only a well-directed fire from *Far East's* breech-loading six-pounders prevented the pirates from overtaking the ship.

Thus he landed his cargo of arms at one end and his cargo of pearl-shell at the other end of a risky voyage.

This exploit is characteristic of William Cowie. He served his friends well, and this voyage laid the foundation of a friendship with the Sultan of Sulu which had far-reaching effect. The Sultan gave William Cowie permission to build a depot in Sandakan. From Sandakan, William Cowie could slip over to the Sulu Islands with less risk. William Cowie, on behalf of the Labuan Trading Company, dealt with the Sultan of Sulu for long. Sultan Abdul Mumin of Brunei equally trusted him. Both had implicit faith in him. All their Chieftains, Pengirans and Datohs gave him their full confidence and never once did he fail anyone of them.

Throughout his life-long relations with Sultans and Chieftains, he carried out his bargains both in spirit and letter. His character, they said, was as upright as his stature, and he commanded their respect and admiration.

The partners of the Labuan Trading Company were three: Captain Ross, William Cowie and Carl Schomburgh. The last named was the chief partner. Though blockade running gave good returns there was also great risk. None of their steamers was ever caught, but greater opportunities were now on offer at Sandakan. The whole of North Borneo was the stake.

Three rival parties were in the game. They were the American Trading Company, led by Joseph Torrey, the Labuan Trading Company whose guiding spirit was William Cowie, and Baron Overbeck the Austrian who by this time had a London backing. Their interests soon clashed and in the event it was Baron Overbeck, backed by his London friends, who won.

A full purse gave his London friends the game. The clash between the American Trading Company and the Labuan Trading Company came over a cargo of rattan and seed pearls shipped from Sandakan to Hongkong. Joseph Torrey was still Rajah of Ambong and Marudu, and also, as he thought, of Sandakan, and he put in a demand for 10 per cent royalty. It was produce, he claimed exported from concessions standing in the name of the American Trading Company.

William Cowie convinced Joseph Torrey that the American Trading Company's concessions as regards Sandakan were worthless. But Joseph Torrey in turn then convinced William Cowie that the prospects of gain were good if a concession of the Sandakan side of the country could be got from the Sultan of Sulu. Joseph Torrey urged William Cowie to throw in his lot and work with the American Trading Company. William Cowie consulted the head partner of the Labuan Trading Company about this. Carl Schombergh refused to consider a merger of their interests and the plan was abandoned. After this, and perhaps because of this, the Labuan Trading Company wound up and went out of business.

William Cowie secured one of its small steamers and went into a trading partnership with the Sultan of Sulu himself.

William Cowie did not forget Labuan and in 1882 he applied to the Sultan for a cession. The Sultan must have thought Cowie's appeal very modest contrasted with the extravagant claims of other cession hunters who beset him. All that William Cowie asked for and got was an unobtrusive grant of a little piece of land, one hundred fathoms square, at Muara about twenty miles south of Labuan, on a promontory at the mouth of Brunei River. This piece of land reverted in course of time to the Sultanate and may yet become a thorn in the flank of Labuan. It's name is Brooketon.

Meanwhile Baron Overbeck had not been idle. He had gained the support of Alfred Dent, head of a banking firm with branches in London and China. Alfred, later Sir Alfred, Dent, saw the possibilities of the Baron's scheme, advanced him in London £10 000 and sent him out to Borneo. At Singapore the Baron chartered a small steamer, s. s. *America*, took Joseph Torrey on board, and sailed for Labuan.

William Treacher was Lieutenant Governor in Labuan and Baron Overbeck convinced him that their object was sound and that they could acquire the whole of North Borneo and develop it though a Chartered Company. William Treacher agreed, and on his strong recommendation and experienced advice, Baron Overbeck decided not to ask for renewal of an outworn concession

to the American Trading Company, but to ask for a new concession with a new outlook altogether.

The negotiations with Sultan Abdul Mumin were successful. Sultan Abdul Mumin ceded all the northern part of North Borneo, some 28,000 square miles of territory, for a yearly payment of $15,000. With William Treacher keeping a watchful eye on him, Baron Overbeck steamed away in s. s. *America*, to Sulu, and there the Sultan of Sulu ceded to Baron Overbeck all Sulu possessions in North Borneo for a yearly payment of $5,000.

Baron Overbeck had succeeded. He had obtained his object by sound diplomacy and strategy. His new powers enabled him to exercise sovereign rights immediately and he appointed William Pryer, one of his friends and a man with long Chinese experience, to be Resident in Sandakan. The Union Jack was hoisted alongside the house flag of Dent Brothers and thus the first step to the creation of the Chartered Company was taken. William Cowie was not in the race. Baron Overbeck, thanks to the powerful backing of Dent Brothers, had completely out-manoevred William Cowie.

In Labuan Baron Overbeck's success was not welcomed. The Lieutenant Governor supported him, but the trading companies opposed him.

Lieutenant Governor Treacher went to London for furlough and to report on these developments, at a time when Captain Ross had left his trade between Labuan and Singapore in the charge of his son Johnie. Johnie had grown up and thoug-

ht he was a man of importance. He aired his views on Labuan in a letter to the Colonial Office in London.

Johnie wrote from Labuan to the Secretary of State to the effect that the youthful and inexperienced Lieutenant Governor was no match for the Austrian Baron and suggested that a more experienced hand than that of William Treacher was wanted to control the destinies of Labuan and Borneo.

After William Treacher returned to Government House at Labuan, Captain Ross called as was his custom whenever he visited the island and was given a very cool and official reception. In course of conversation the Lieutenant Governor alluded to the letter and said that when a shipowner chose to write a letter to the Secretary of State, which was not only unfriendly in tone throughout, but ended by suggesting that the Lieutenant Governor was too young and inexperienced and should be replaced by a more capable man, it was time that friendly relations ceased.

Captain Ross denied all knowledge of the letter, and the Governor then produced a reprint of the letter in a Government Blue book.

It was signed John Dillon Ross, and described the writer as "a shipowner trading on the Borneo coast for the last thirty years".

"I don't suppose", said the Lieutenant Governor cooly to Captain Ross "there are *two* John Dillon Rosses, who have been trading on the Borneo coast for the last thirty years, are there?"

"It's that blessed son of mine", exclaimed Captain Ross with sudden enlightenment.

The Lieutenant Governor having learned that young Johnie, barely twenty years, wished to overturn Governors on the score of their youth, thought that he ought to overturn the budding statesman himself and administer a stout rattan cane in the proper place.

Friendship having been restored, William Treacher invited the elder Ross to dinner and after dinner they sat and talked on the verandah of Government House. William Treacher explained how the Austrian Government had refused to support Baron Overbeck's claims and how a British Chartered Company was in course of formation. He himself had been offered the Governorship of the new territory and he had decided to accept it. But old Captain Ross who had done so much to foster the trade on the Borneo coast was never admitted into the circle of promoters of the Chartered Company because of that letter written by his son to the Secretary of State.

When Johnie, then in Singapore, was told by his father about the result of the letter, the son replied:

"If either you or the Lieutenant Governor thinks that I deserve a good licking, I'll have a single stick bout with John Grinston, which will come to the same thing".

Shortly afterwards, the British North Borneo Chartered Company was formed with a capital of a million sterling and s. s. *Alastor* sailed out

from Singapore with one of the new directors.

William Treacher was appointed the first Governor of North Borneo and established his new capital at Kudat. s. s. ***Alastor*** followed his lead and extended her voyages to Kudat, forging a link between Labuan and her neighbour.

CHAPTER 8

CHARTERED COMPANY

Sultan Abdul Mumin died in 1885, of cancer it is said at the great age of 100 years.

The new Sultan Hashim Jalil-ul-Alam immediately fell into the clutches of cession hunters. He had no money of his own and inherited none. To keep up his dignity he raised money where he could. Adventurers were not slow to take advantage of the Sultan's misfortunes He fell into their debt and pledged his revenues to them.

Nevertheless he showed himself to be a man of exceptional character and if he had not proved himself to be such a man he would have been disposed of early in his reign. He also carved up his Sultanate. Many years before his accession the Sultanate had been about the size of Great Britain but during his reign it dwindled to the size of the two counties of Devon and Cornwall.

William Cowie profited by various deals and one of his concessions was a post office between Labuan and Brunei. His partner in this was an-

other Scot, James Robertson, then Colliery Manager in Labuan. They were to issue their own postage stamps and run a mail service. They printed a stock of stamps worth a face value of $10,000 in London and engaged Lawson of Singapore to manage the office. Lawson on his arrival found there was something wrong and that no one would buy the postage stamps, so the venture failed. Hard times overshadowed Labuan for nearly a generation. The decades from 1880 to 1910 depressed the hopes of even the most optimistic people. The chief cause was plain to see.

The destruction of the last stronghold of piracy on the Borneo coast at Tungku in 1879 removed the chief source of danger. The garrison could be reduced to a mere skeleton of its former self. No longer was there any fear that Labuan could be raided and captured as Balembangan had been a century before. The Chartered Company was a powerful neighbour on Labuan's eastern flank and the Company tackled the few remaining pirates with as much energy as it could.

The fortunes of Labuan were at a low ebb and the British Government did not even appoint a Governor. Charles Cameron Lee, the last appointed Governor, left in 1881. After his departure officials were appointed from the local staff to serve as Lieutenant Governor, with departmental duties in addition to this post. Each served also as Treasurer, Postmaster and Magistrate.

Except for its well-kept Government House and barracks, the town of Victoria must have seemed to a visitor to be a mean and ramshackle sort of

place. The wooden wharves and untidy godowns looked as if they were falling to pieces. The long rows of whitewashed shophouses in the untidy road faced the harbour. But trade was good at times. Piles of cargo were handled. Natives unloaded prahus and carried loads of rattan, trepang, birdsnests, beeswax and rubber to the shophouses across the road to be traded to the Chinese for cloth, brass-wire, beads, tobacco, powder, bullets, and anything else that suited their fancy.

The scene in Labuan about 1887 has been described by Lady Brassey in her memoirs "The Last Voyage". Lord and Lady Brassey were well known people. Load Brassey had been Civil Lord of the Admiralty. On his retirement, he and Lady Brassey toured many parts of the world and in the course of a voyage of 36,000 miles on their well-known steam yacht *Sunbeam*, 576 tons, they called at Labuan. No two people knew British possessions overseas better than Lord and Lady Brassey, for *Sunbeam* had fourteen years of cruising to her credit.

It was April 6th 1887. Lieutenant Commander Hamilton, R. N. (retired) Harbour-master, Postmaster, Vice-Admiral of the Port, Treasurer and holder of half a dozen other offices, called on board. Lady Brassey thought Labuan quite the funniest and most out-of-the world sort of place. There had been no Governor of Labuan since Charles Lee left, but it boasted capital public offices, a first rate Government House, Church, parsonage and other amenities. Unfortunately

there was nobody to be governed and nothing for the officials to do.

Dr and Mrs Leys brought Lord and Lady Brassey ashore in the afternoon across a rickety wooden pier and led them to the padang where the public offices stood. Some of the party walked and some rode in little carriages called gharries, drawn by ponies. The shops were kept by Chinese. Dayak birds' nests collectors were selling nests. Rhino horns and pearl shells with tiny pearls adhering to them were on sale. A drive through the island seems to have been a happy memory. It was like driving through one vast park along soft springy turf roads in fragrant jungle wrote Lady Brassey. Fruit abounded, oranges, pomaloes, mangoes, mangosteens and durians, but April is not the season to enjoy them ripe.

There stood a large gaol, but there were no prisoners. So long indeed had it been empty that the gates stood permanently open and rusted on their hinges. The chief gaoler remained but he had long since turned his attention to other duties. The revenue was at a low ebb. The question arose whether the Treasury contained enough money to meet some fifty or sixty dollars worth of drafts given in exchange for expenses ashore.

The pensionlist was already large. There were three clergymen on the pension list, though there was no resident clergyman. There was a hospital, but no resident doctor, and two doctors were on the pension list.

The party attended a Chinese open-air theatre, a waxwork exhibition and a puppet show, and

boarded their steam yacht in moon light.

Sunbeam sailed next morning to visit the co of North Borneo. Unhappily Lady Brassey, w had often contracted malarial fever in her trave suffered another attack of fever caught probab when ashore in Labuan. Lord Brassey recor that the strain of her visits ashore told heavi upon her strength. She became seriously ill th day after she left Borneo. *Sunbeam* reached Thur day Island, but Lady Brassey died on board soo after and she was buried at sea.

There were occasions when Labuan brighten up, particularly when differences of opinion aro between. Labuan and her neighbour, Nort Borneo Lieutenant Commander A. S. Hamilton R. N. (retired) faced the Chartered Company' officials with dignity. He had a political problem to solve. It concerned a small war which the Chartered Company had decided to wage from Labuan without asking his leave to do so. Though the Chartered Company had governing rights on the main land, its Charter expressly forbade it to negotiate directly with foreign states and in particular directed that all differences with the Sultan of Brunei should be submitted to London. The Company had a difference of opinion with the Sultan of Brunei on the ground that the Sultan and his princes connived at the murder of of the Company's subjects at the hands of a certain Pengiran, who ruled a province forming an enclave in the Company's territory, but still belonging to the Sultanate. The Company demanded that the Pengiran's misdeeds should be

punished or at least stopped. Negotiations be through London, but what with the slowness of the mail service, the dilatory methods of home officials and the Sultan's skill in delaying proceedings by every method known to an eastern potentate, the Company realized that they would obtain no satisfaction that way and they decided to take matters into their own hands. The offending Pengiran had built a fort at Kota Klias in his small province on the mainland opposite Labuan and the Company determined to attack and destroy it. To this end they landed a force on Labuan without notice to anybody. Captain Beeston in command of the Chartered Company's force was an Indian Army officer of experience. On the Court of Directors in London there sat an Admiral and a General, both men of distinction in their professions and William Cowie was at hand. The Court of Directors knew well what they were about. Captain Beeston recruited men from Singapore and elsewhere through the Company's agents. Some hundreds of recruits, Sikhs, Pathans, Malays and Somalis arrived at Labuan wharf in one of Captain Ross' ships just about the same time that Captain Beeston himself arrived from the opposite direction with a group of the Company's civil servants, constabulary officers, and police. The thing was well timed and Lieutenant Commander Hamilton was taken by surprise, and spoke his naval mind. "It was an outrage. It was an invasion! If any British men-of-war hove in sight he would show them what for."

In the meantime he made the best of it. Captain Beeston began to knock his recruits into some sort of shape. His most trusted fighting men were Dayaks from Sarawak, subjects of the Rajah of Sarawak who never allowed his people to go in for such fighting if he could prevent it. The Dayaks seemed to have no great respect for the Sultanate and they roamed over Labuan seeking Brunei people whom they might destroy. Lieutenant Commander Hamilton and Captain Beeston kept on friendly terms and one morning they rode round Victoria to admire improvements. Lieutenant Commander Hamilton as a former naval officer took especial care of the grounds of Government House and of the roads in the town. Everything was ship shape. He was proud of his neat avenues and flower beds. The roads in the town were smooth and freshly sanded. Their inspection over Lieutenant Commander Hamilton graciously accepted Captain Beeston's invitation to go aboard the ship and partake of refreshment.

They found the Chartered Company's officers sprawling in long chairs and apparently in the last stage of thirst. The spectacle disgusted Commander Hamilton

"Come back with me to Government House", he said to Captain Beeston.

As they cantered their ponies up North Road in the shade of the avenue Lieutenant Commander Hamilton, always in the lead smelled fire.

"I believe Government House is on fire!", he called back over his shoulder. He twisted his nose in the air. He switched his pony and took

the rise at a gallop. The stench and reek were stronger.

On the lawns of Government House he found a group of Dayaks smoking heads on a row of tripods. Beneath each tripod a fire burned and from it hung a head turning slowly in the smoke. The Dayaks bent low to blow upon the embers. The smell of burning flesh and smoke fouled the air. Lieutenant Commander Hamilton laid his riding switch across the Dayaks' backs and they in turn drew their parangs. Only the timely arrival of Captain Beeston on his pony prevented serious trouble. Lieutenant Commander Hamilton called for his Sikh guard to remove all traces of the disgusting scene.

The Dayaks complained that the Lieutenant Governor had stolen their heads and would not be satisfied until Captain Beeston had given them permission to look for more! They returned later with some more heads, and searched for a more convenient place to cook them.

At last the Chartered Company's expedition sailed out of Victoria and Lieutenant Commander Hamilton must have been thankful to see them go. The small fleet sailed across the channel and up the Klias River to attack Kota Klias. The Pengiran's fortress was reduced and his province taken into the Chartered Company's territory as spoils of war.

The little Colony had for many years been in receipt of money from Great Britain to balance its budget. The grant in aid had stopped in 1868 in the days when the "Pope" was governor. The

island had difficulty in making ends meet, and appeals for help were made in vain. The revenue depended on the coal mine and on trade with the mainland.

England at last grew tired of an island that refused to grow up and handed it over to the Chartered Company to administer.

On 1st January 1890 the Governor of the Chartered Company's territory was sworn in as the Governor of Labuan also. Lieutenant Commander Hamilton read the Letters Patent and the Commission in the Court House, and for the next twenty six years, though remaining a Crown Colony, Labuan was administered from Sandakan.

It must have been a proud day in William Cowie's life when he landed in Labuan as Chairman of the Chartered Company with Labuan under his wing. From being merely a partner of the Labuan Trading Co. he was now head of the Chartered Company which governed the island and with the consent of his co-directors and the Colonial Office he could make and unmake governors.

He resided in Blackheath near London, and attended handsome offices in the city in Threadneedle Street. He presided at the annual Borneo dinner in London and addressed a hundred guests with the Secretary of State for the Colonies sitting on his right hand. His handsome presence dominated the banquet hall. A concert singer sang Arthur Benson's song "Land of Hope and Glory", set to Elgar's majestic tune "Pomp and Circumstance", enthusiastic toasts were drunk and the

banquet hall was redolent with the aroma of Borneo cigars and coffee.

William Cowie's voice was heard in imperial circles, but he could never forget that he had been a ship's engineer. On his visits of inspection to Labuan he did not fully live up to the dignity of his position, and he would dally in Labuan while the Governor at Sandakan urgently called for his attendance in some crisis or other with recalcitrant chieftains. At the sight of a ship in need of repair in Labuan the Chairman ripped off his coat and got to work in his shirt sleeves.

While affairs of state awaited him, he sweated on the beach, clad in overalls, tinkering at a boiler of one of the Company's steam-launches.

But let it be said that his impressive figure, his tall stature, his long moustaches, his dark handsome face, his fluent Malay and practised Sulu made up for many shortcomings. His friendship with the native rulers and his success as a trader in years gone by assured him of a welcome on every coast.

His strength lay in his knowledge of Borneo and in his close friendship with the Sultans and their chieftains.

William Cowie found good jobs for two of his old Labuan friends. A J. West, an engineer at the Coal Mine, became General Manager of the North Borneo Railway, Weston being named after him, and James Robertson, the Colliery Manager, was appointed Manager of the British Borneo Exploration Company to develop manganese in Marudu Bay.

Walter Clutterbuck in his memoirs wrote that Government buildings in Labuan seemed to be falling out of repair. He noted grassgrown roadways and brickbuilt posts without any gates to them, but he appreciated the green turf, the cultivated orchards and the shade trees. The island seemed to have been the paradise which the British Officials had intended to make it, but Government House, surrounded by its park and shady trees, it's tennis lawns and glades, now stood empty.

Though built of hard wood, white ants had attacked one wing which would have to be rebuilt. It was well appointed in every respect and this picturesque mansion, embosomed in trees and surrounded by lawns and gardens was the most beautiful thing in Labuan.

Walter Clutterbuck thought that there were about two thousand Kadayans settled on the island. Malays occupied Rancha-rancha and they crossed the harbour in tiny dug-outs as they still do. The scene at Victoria was one of great activity.

Chinese merchants were doing a roaring trade and making a huge profit out of it. Sago flour seemed to be everywhere. There were boatloads of it alongside the ships in the harbour and there were thousands of sacks of the stuff piled up on the wharves and in the godowns behind. Fine particles of sago floated through the air. In a yard some distance from the wharves, a herd of cattle awaited shipment to Singapore. There was money, wrote Walter Clutterbrick, in Labuan

in those days. s. s. *Alastor, Brunei, Ceylon, Fairy Queen,* and *Flower of Yarrow,* were at anchor.

To those familiar with the administration of the Chartered Company the scene would appear typical. White ants in Government House, but brisk trade in port. The Court of Directors did not believe in expensive buildings.

Labuan no longer had a garrison and a bare dozen of Indian Police kept guard. There was no danger in Labuan from pirates. Governor Treacher at Sandakan had adopted a successful policy. Though the last pirate stronghold at Tungku had been rooted out, the east coast was far from secure. Pirates still haunted islands of the southern Philippines, and as a group they afforded shelter to fleets of boats. America's strong hand held the Moros firmly after a period of resistance, and when the imposition of taxes, and the compulsion on boys to go to school, caused many Suluks to settle on the coast of North Borneo, they were received with welcome. They were exempted from payment of poll-tax, their children were not compelled to attend school, and they all led a carefree existence. Order was kept by the gunboat *Petrel* of the sort that William Cowie approved. She was built to his design in Hong Kong, had enough speed to overtake any sailing craft, sported one cannon on her deck, and carried a copper ram below her water line to ram hostile boats without damage to herself.

Governor Treacher in early days selected the channel between Bum Bum Island and the mainland as a home for these sea-going gypsies. He

called it Semporna, a Malay word meaning "perfection". Blockhouses were built of ironwood and small garrisons of police were posted at Tambisan, Tunku and Semporna. With s. y. *Petrel* at sea there was no further trouble except an occasional raid.

Thus Port Victoria had become a back water. No longer did Labuan pay honours to H.M. ships. The Admiral Commanding the China Fleet landed year by year at Sandakan, where his twenty-one guns boomed in salute of the Sabah Jack, and where the Chartered Company's guns boomed in reply.

Labuan felt isolated. They recalled their ceremonial past. In the early days of the island, much had been done for them, but now they had to do more for themselves.

In 1896 the discontented people of Labuan sent a petition to London. After six years of Chartered Company rule they clamoured for a change and they prayed for an enquiry into the administration.

The Chartered Company had sent one of their best men to administer the island from early in 1895. This man was Captain Raffles Flint, a descendant of the famous Sir Stamford Raffles, but even this popular official failed as a peacemaker As a result of these complaints Sir Charles Mitchell, the Governor of Singapore and High Commissioner for Borneo, arrived in Labuan with his Secretary Claude Severn in H.M.S. *Porpoise* Finding only a District Officer in Charge they hurried on to Sandakan and returned with Leicester P. Beaufort, the Governor. Pending the

arrival of the distinguished party from Sandakan the District Officer in Labuan whitewashed his Court House in token of the purity of the justice which he administered and all the people stood on their toes in expectation. But the whitewash looked a shade too obvious and Sir Charles decided to hold his enquiry at Government House instead. Governor Beaufort was at hand ready to answer questions about the revenue, the expenditure and trade of the Colony. Complainants were invited to attend. One petitioner, who awaited the hearing of his own complaints, described the procedure as bluff.

"Blarney! blarney!" he bawled till called to order. The hearing was adjourned.

Next morning the hearing continued and the outraged petitioner had to listen to questions about blue books and the Chartered Company's omission to print the Royal Arms on the Labuan Official Gazette. Other questions were asked about the use of North Borneo currency notes in the island. The outraged petioner could not contain himself and broke in again.

"All that is a lot of frivolous humbugging nonsense," he cried. "Some petitioners have stuffed their petitions with it. Nobody else cares three straws and these things do no harm to anybody."

It was some time before the petitioner could get himself heard on his own points. His complaints were that roads were neglected and almost impassable; that magistrates were incompetent though not dishonest and that many cases were

worthy of the High Commissioner's attention.

The High Commissioner heard and dismissed two cases after two days of enquiry. Regarding the other cases which the petitioner wished to bring to his notice, the High Commissioner told Claude Severn to write saying that the High Commissioner thanked the petitioner for offering to prepare more additional charges, but he was not prepared to open any more affairs.

So the enquiry ended.

Though the islanders were dissatisfied there was never any question about their loyalty to the Crown.

The Jubilee was celebrated on the fiftieth anniversary of the cession. On 24th December 1896 a telegram was sent by the cable laid two years earlier to the Secretary of State expressing loyalty to the Queen. H. M. S. *Pique* lay in harbour for the celebration and Leicester Beaufort gave a ball at Government House which was attended by a large and brilliant assembly, dancing being kept up with great animation until the early hours of Christmas morning.

The submarine cable put Labuan on the map again. The Eastern Extension Company, (now merged into Cable & Wireless Ltd) laid the submarine cable between Singapore and Hongkong via Labuan, and the Eastern Extension soon became the most important business in the island eclipsing the coal company. The European staff with their families numbered about twenty persons in all. The Eastern Extension did things well. The Manager's house and the mess were

on high ground near the present air field, and their tennis lawns and shady gardens vied with those of Government House, whose gates were lower down. Rival heights of flagstaffs were the talk of the day and each tried to out-top the other. Social contests of the time are amusingly described in a book "Mr. Podd of Borneo," which won the Daily Mail prize of the year. Peter Blundell, the author was an assistant in the Island Trading Company which shipped cutch from Brunei, and as his business often required his presence in Labuan, he had opportunity to watch the scene in Labuan with amusement. Other books followed, and for a time Labuan basked in a radiance it never knew before, and its social life earned a world reputation for fun. But the fun often turned to feud. One of the officials bred Siamese cats He was very fond of them. A visitor staying in his bungalow noticed at lunch time that two cooked fowls were brought on the table, one for the host and his guest, and the other to be carved and partitioned to the cats.

The cats, as cats will, spent their nights in romantic adventure. Their trysting ground was the garden of another official who vented his wrath on the cats. He strongly objected to cats howling and youling in his garden by night. He loaded his gun and shot three of them.

"How was I to know," he exclaimed, "that they were the other man's cats? Don't Siamese cats howl the same as other cats?"

The feud between these two officials lasted for years. It affected the social life of the island. If

some body went to play croquet, a fashionable game of the day, at the house of one, he was unwelcome at the house of the other. The only friend of both was the Doctor. When para rubber came to the East, Labuan received a very few seeds as a great prize in 1897. One seed was planted in old Government House grounds and another seed was planted near Callaghan Road. Both did well and Labuan developed a small rubber industry. Wherever William Cowie went, he urged people to plant rubber. Everybody including Governors and prisoners must plant rubber. The prisoners soon got exemption from this job. Popular clamour stopped it. William Cowie had not foreseen that if the Chartered Company used prisoners from rubber estates to plant rubber trees on Crown land, the Government would be competing unfairly with the planters. The Governor walked about Labuan with his pocket full of rubber seeds and poked them into hedges along roadsides, as Admiral Collingwood did with acorns in England.

To those days belong some of the stories of prison life. Prisoners were drafted from other places to help in public works and they looked upon a sentence of imprisonment in Labuan as a period of enforced work for the Government. *Masok Sign*, meaning to enter into a contract, became the common phrase to enlist in the police force or to serve a sentence of imprisonment.

A prisoner was posted for duty as a gardener in an official's bungalow. Returning to gaol late one evening, he found the gaol door locked

against him. He hammered on the door, and the warder opened the door to admit him.

"What have I done wrong that I should be locked out like this?" asked the prisoner.

A prisoner was condemned to wear irons. He complained that his leg-irons kept falling off.

"See one of the rivets has fallen out and I have had to tie it with string. Give me another set of chains. I am afraid I may lose the Company's property."

Labuan came into prominence on the outbreak of war between Russia and Japan about 1900 because Victoria was a convenient port at which British shipmasters intending to break the blockade could fill their burkers with coal. In Labuan the sealed orders carried by the master of the ship were opened and the crews learned the desperate nature of the voyage onward. Japan had a strangle hold on Russia, and their blockade of Vladivostock was efficient. To run the blockade through the Japanese cordon of warships was a dangerous business. The seamen refused to take the risk.

The Resident in charge of Labuan at the time was Walter Hastings and no better official for the job at the time could have been appointed. He was a son of Admiral Hastings, of Crimean war days. He learned, he said, all the ropes as a boy when laid across his father's knee. He knew all the etiquette too He could discipline seamen and they would obey him A magistrate ashore, he became port Vice-Admiral afloat, asserting that by an old regulation he was

entitled to this dignity. Other officials' eyes glowed with envy when they watched the array of flags and pennants flown by Walter Hastings on duty. He was a "Pasha", and insisted that he be treated with the hignity due to a holder of that title. His fater, Admiral Hastings, had been created Pasha for services rendered to the Turks at the time of the Crimean War, and as the title was hereditary Walter Hastings claimed it as his own. In Labuan the title did not seem out of place. Walter Hastings ordered oars to be tossed in naval style when occasion demanded, and flew the Union rather than the Sabah Jack.

Walter Hastings knew his job. He could hearten irresolute seamen and ship after ship cleared from Victoria with bunkers full of Labuan coal. The crews cheered as they raised anchor and put to sea to run British cargoes through blockading squadrons. High authority affected to disdain that sort of thing, but blockade running was good for coal, good for the cable station, and again pointed to Labuan's destiny as a strategic base in time of war

With the turn of the century bicycles appeared in Labuan. Though few in unmber, regulations must be obeyed.

The Resident, about to leave the island for a week, called his J. Ps to Judges' Chambers and admonished them to hold petty sessions regularly.

The two magistrates were Dr. Cleverton and Datoh Roberts, both well known men and bosom friends. They went to see the Resident off and did not leave the ship till a late hour. When they

mounted their bicycles a police constable stopped them. "Your names, please", he said officiously. "You have no lights." They gave their names.

Next day they presided on the bench and disposed of two or three cases and then to their horror the Sergeant called out, "Next case, Cleverton, Cle-ver-ton, **Cleverton**!" Dr. Cleverton realised he was now for trial, so he left the bench and entered the dock. "Here, Your Honour!"

The Sergeant charged him with riding a bicycle without lights He pleaded guilty and and his brother J. P. fined him five dollars. He bowed to the Bench and resumed his seat on it.

It was then the turn of Datoh Roberts. His name was called. He entered the dock, pleaded guilty and expected the fine would be the same. Not so, for Dr. Cleverton had more to say.

"Cases of this kind are becoming too common. This is the second case before the court this morning. The fine will be ten dollars." That was the last cstse and the two old fellows left the court jokingly arm in arm.

Then the day of motor vehicles dawned. Labuan was a jay-walker's paradise.

There were only two motor cars on the island and though there were several miles of roads, these two came into collision, head on, in broad daylight. The two magistrates who tried the case knew little about motors, these being the only two they had ever seen. However their judgment was very sensible. Each owner would pay the damage done to the other's vehicle.

A growing sense of the importance of Labuan as a strategic centre led the British Government to take the island back from the administration of the Chartered Company. As a coaling station and cable station it was coming into prominence. Moreover the failing strength of Sultan Hashim Jalil-ul-Alam (1885-1906) had been watched for many years and changes in Brunei were imminent.

The time for the Colony to revert from the Chartered Company to the Colonial Office was now at hand. This was due not "in answer to the frequently and strongly expressed desire of the colonists," as Sir Hugh Clifford mistakenly put it. It was due rather to the demands of imperial policy and the unsatisfactory conditions in Brunei.

The Sultanate was degenerating fast. Its population dwindled and many were leaving the Sultanate to settle in Sarawak or North Borneo, where work was easily had. Successive High Commissioners had given warning to the Colonial Office that the very existence of the Sultanate was drawing to a close. In 1904 a Commission had reported upon the conditions then prevailing in Brunei, and as a result of this and other reports the transfer of Labuan back to the Colonial Office was determined on. By Order-in-Council the island became part of the Straits Settlements on 1st January 1906. It was to serve as a stepping-stone to Brunei.

The transfer was well timed, and events soon showed the wisdom of the official view. The first Resident under the Straits Settlements administration was M. S. H. McArthur.

In that same year 1906, Sultan Hashim died, and Resident McArthur, proclaimed the succession of the new Sultan, Mahomed Jemalul Alam II. The Resident concluded a treaty with the new Sultan who consented to accept the advice of a British Resident, agreed that a Resident should be posted to the Sultanate and that a system of Government similar to that of the Malay States should be adopted. Meanwhile Resident McArthur continued to watch the situation from Labuan. Soon afterward a Residency was built in Brunei and Brunei was administered apart from Labuan with direct reference to the High Commissioner at Singapore. The island entered on a quiet and uneventful period. It still enjoyed the privileges of a free port, and there were no duties other than a light excise duty on petrol, spirits and tobacco. This period under the generous government of Singapore proved to be the island's nearest approach to paradise. Never was the Colonial Office or the Chartered Company so generous as Singapore.

On 1st December 1912 the status of Labuan was confirmed as one of the Straits Settlements and the island ranked with Penang, Malacca and other Straits Settlements.

These changes raised expectations of trade that were not realised in spite of development of oil fields on the mainland. The island boasted, however, that it imported more cigarettes for consumption per head of the population than any other place in the world. No importer in Labuan ever hung his head at the imputation that he

imported cigarettes and matches not so much for his own customers on the island as for smuggling to the mainland. The expenditure vote when the Japanese burst in was $200,000 a year, mostly supplied by the sister settlement of Singapore. The population was over 4000 in number.

CHAPTER 9

WAR

The Resident in charge of Labuan when the Japanese declared war in December 1941 was A. H. P. Humphrey. He had a few departmental officers to assist him. From early in December 1941 the people in Labuan watched the campaign in Malaya with anxiety and realised that though the troops fought gallantly, they had little or no support against Japanese bombers. The loss of the big ships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* increased despondency. Without naval or air defence from the west, the position was hopeless.

The troops detailed to carry out demolitions at the oil fields in Miri completed their task and left for Kuching, and on 16th December Japanese forces landed at Seria and went by road to Kuala Belait. On Christmas Day 1941 the troops left Kuching and withdrew southwards, and all British territory in Borneo lay open to the enemy.

The Japanese arrived in Labuan on the first day of the new year. There was no resistance.

The Resident received the enemy at the Cable Offices on the plateau and was himself interned.

On 3rd January 1942 the Japanese took formal possession of Labuan Most of the treasury notes had been sent away for destruction and insufficient time remained to destroy the rest. It had been intended to burn them near the disused coal mines in the north of the island, but time was short and the packets of notes were sent by boat to the mainland and were destroyed in Beaufort a day or two later, just in time before the Japanese reached Beaufort also.

The Japanese renamed the island and called it Pulau Maida, after the name of the Commander-in-chief of their armies in Borneo. General Prince Maida was killed soon in an air crash on the coast of Borneo and the Japanese searched the area for several days to recover the body without success.

The Japanese restored Labuan to the Sultanate of Brunei during their occupation, and the Sultan thus recovered for three and a half years rule over the island which his ancestors had ceded nearly a hundred years ago.

The Japanese overthrew the granite slab, which commemorated the cession, and its companion slab, which commemorated the visit of the Prince of Wales, and in their place set up an obelisk of soft stone telling of their own exploits. This obelisk stood until in its turn it was overthrown and the other two set up again.

The Japanese set about the development of Brunei Bay at the expense of Labuan's central position and built no less than five piers at

Tanjong Sapu on Muara Island running out into deep water. The piers were built of soft wood and had a short life, but they showed the vulnerable position of Labuan as an entrepot.

News of the war trickled slowly through to the people of Labuan. They heard of the fall of Singapore on 15th February 1942 from the Japanese commander. The Philippines together with the American bases at Guam and Wake Islands fell soon after. In February the Japanese defeated an allied fleet in the battle of the Java Sea under the Dutch Admiral Dorman, and invaded Java and New Guinea. The enemy spread the news of their successes, but the tide of enemy success in eastern waters had reached its height and began to turn. In March 1942 General McArthur left the Philippines and set up his headquarters in Australia. He took charge of all allied forces in the south-west Pacific and people in Labuan heard of the first success in the batiled of Coral Sea.

In New Guinea the Japanese failed to make progress.

At Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, the Americans seized the Japanese airfield and base.

At the battle of Bismarck Sea in March 1943 the American air force sank a whole Japanese convoy and not an enemy ship survived. News of these battles drifted along the coasts thanks to the common Malayan dialect which is used by all seagoing people in these seas. Labuan people repeated the stories which they heard of how Japanese sailors and soldiers, smothered in oil,

perished by thousands along the coast of New Guinea and their stories are substantially correct.

The island people understood that seapower was returning and they took heart.

Slowly the American and Australian troops cleared the enemy out of New Guinea, fighting through some of the worst jungle-clad and mountainous country in the world.

News of the continued success inflamed the fighting spirit in Jesselton, and on 10th October 1943, Double Tenth as it is called, a national day of the Chinese, the Kinabalu Guerrillas attacked and killed some fifty Japanese. In the reprisals which followed about two thousand people in the neighbourhood of Jesselton lost their lives. Of the captives large numbers were sent to Labuan and there paraded in chains before the eyes of their compatriots. The traders faced, day after day, the dreary and dreadful prospect of watching their manacled friends drag their limbs through the streets till death released them.

The spectacle added to the horror caused by the chief gaoler in Labuan. The prison tortures were execrable. The gaoler, a Malay, treated all races alike. His cruelty earned him the nickname of KingKong during the enemy occupation and a sentence of ten years imprisonment in a British gaol after it.

General MacArthur's strategy was brilliant. It gave the allies a chain of island bases enabling them to carry out a successful invasion of the Philippines and of the southern islands of Japan without wasting power away from the main route.

One of these island bases was Morotai. It lay midway between the western tip of New Guinea and the Philippines. It is one of the Halmahira Group, and provided an excellent anchorage From Morotai an attack was mounted northwards through the Philippines and when success was assured, a second attack was mounted westwards to recover Labuan from the enemy.

Strategy pointed to early recapture of Labuan because of the importance of recovering supplies of oil, rubber and timber from Borneo and because of the necessity of capturing a base from which to help to retake Singapore.

The Pacific war moved swiftly to its climax. On 1st May 1945 a brigade of the 9th Australian Division, supported by American and Australian airforces landed at Tarakan on the east coast of Borneo. The capture of Okinawa Island, a southern Japanese Island, the largest and most prolonged operation of the Pacific war, was almost complete by the beginning of June, while further south the liberation of the East Indies was proceeding.

The time to strike at Labuan had arrived The mastery of the air and sea, and superiority of equipment were ours. Cruisers, destroyers, rocket and mortar ships with powerful air cover slung down on Labuan an aggregate of high explosive three times greater than at Tarakan. General MacArthur was present on the beach and described the whole operation of recapturing Labuan and the shore of Brunei Bay as flawless, both in timing and execution.

Regarding the taking of Labuan he declared, "Rarely is such a great strategic prize obtained at such low cost". Major General G.F. Wootten commanded the Ninth Australian Division which mounted the attack.

The operation was known as Oboe Six. The convoy of a hundred ships with twenty five thousand men aboard assembled in Morotai Island early in June. The distance from Morotai in the Halmahera group to Labuan is 920 miles, and a large sheet of water between two islands afforded a good anchorage for the fleet of supply ships, the transports and their escort. The ships were of all kinds. There were the Liberty ships built by the Americans for carrying cargoes and there were Landing ships capable of forcing themselves up the beaches and landing men and vehicles from ramps let down from the bows.

Some of the ships left Morotai on Sunday, 3rd June, going slowly ahead, followed by the main fleet which left at noon on Monday. The combined convoy sailed northwards towards Zamboanga, thence through the channel between Palawan and Balabac Islands and headed for the south China Sea.

To watch such a convoy from the air is an inspiring sight. The ships seem to move so slowly. The formation is so accurate. The white wakes of the ships stretch so far on divergent lines over the calm, blue and motionless sea. During the following Saturday night, the convoy lay out in the China Sea west of Labuan and early on Sunday morning stood in towards Labuan,

approaching the south east point of the island. It brought with it the support of the American and British navies and air forces. There were less than twenty British officers in an army where there were over twenty thousand Australians. The main British armies had only just shared in the conquest of Germany and other British armies were fully engaged in Burma, but each of the twenty British Officers was an expert in his own way and there were some who knew every part of the coast and most of the interior.

The Ninth Australian division had fought in the Middle East and in New Guinea. No allied troops knew their enemy better than these Australians who had met them in the jungle. This division had memories of the loss of the eighth division at Singapore three years before and were determined to avenge them. The troops had been encamped in Morotai for two or more months *outside* the defence perimeter of that island and in touch with the Japanese who still occupied the hills. The Ninth was fighting fit and one of the most famous of the fighting divisions in the Imperial armies. It had won fame at Tobruk.

The tenth of June 1945 will live in the memory of the people of Labuan. It was at half past nine o'clock on a Sunday morning that troops of the Ninth Australian division landed on the beach of Labuan and began the deliverance of the people from their Japanese masters.

That Sunday was calm. The seas all round the coasts of Borneo are usually calm in June, but the officers were anxious lest a low swell might

come in with the rising tide from the west and impede the troops as they moved ashore to the attack. So the landing was confined to the beaches inside Victoria Harbour and a landing which had been contemplated on the outer beach beyond Ramsey Point was not attempted.

The scene was peaceful and there was no surf when with startling suddenness the naval bombardment opened. "For goodness sake leave some part of the island standing", said one officer to a naval gunnery officer, "I have got to land there!"

The high tide, one of the highest of the year, occurred shortly after nine o'clock and the landing-ships beached themselves close in. The troops who led the assault stormed ashore. The intense bombardment had brought almost everything in the town level with the ground. Only the Rest House, half the Clock Tower, and a few walls were left standing. Trees were shattered and blackened with the blast. Every roof was knocked off, and a few days later one could stand watching a bulldozer pass over the town scraping up the brick dust for use on the air strip.

The Japanese withdrew as the troops raced shore-wards. They put up their main defence along the far side of the canal about half a mile from the beach. Burned out of this, they retreated further north and formed pockets of defence in the scrub on the west side of old Government House. There at Kampong Java a few hundred dug themselves in. The site consists of a low ridge about fifty feet high, protected by old Government House on one side and provided

with a clear view and field of fire towards the air strip. The other sides had thick cover under fruit trees and a dozen houses in the kampong gave accomodation. Water of a sort was available in the valley. In this orchard of coconut palms and jack-fruit, of guava, mangoes and mangosteen, they dug their rifle pits and machine-gun posts and lay invisible from air overhead. Almost the whole garrison of Kampong Java perished. Over two hundred bodies were counted and buried. They were mostly burned to death by napam bombs. These were dropped from the air through the thick cover of the trees and they burst and scattered flame on contact with the ground. They were made of naphtha, phosphorous, petrol and rubber with other inflammable stuff which ran, leaked and spread everywhere, trickling into pits and shell holes and burning everything it touched.

Meanwhile what remained of the civilian population was collecting in a compound near the old golf course near the beach. It was a flat area surrounded by a light wire fence. A hospital and store took shape almost immediately from the debris of attaps, corrugated iron and timber scattered about everywhere. Arrows painted on trees and set up on posts guided the population to the spot.

The landing ships disgorged supplies upon the beach and stocks of enemy padi and rice appeared mysteriously from all sides. People who were almost naked clothed themselves from piles of misfit uniforms and wore Australian jungle green

with the greatest satisfaction. An old Australian sunhat was venerated like a halo.

The behaviour of the population was not all it should have been on that Sunday morning and following days. Army headquarters on Morotai in those first days received a telegram asking how best the divisional troops could deal with a truculent civilian mob, who professed they were British subjects. The Civil Affairs Officers could not be everywhere at once and some of the combatant Australian troops had come into conflict with the Labuan Chinese. When a similar state of affairs had arisen a few days before at Tarakan, in Dutch territory, the Australian combatant troops were armed with sticks in sufficient numbers to quell the riot, but those were Dutch Subjects.

"Batons and clubs!" shouted an angry staff officer fisting the table with one hand and arraigning me with the other. "No," I replied, "the Chinese are second to none in looting and they are only trying to get back their own. Remember too these are British subjects!" The gallant staff officer was relieved to learn that there were people who were bigger looters than the Ninth Division and could share the blame. We changed the conversation.

On that Sunday morning in Labuan there was no service in the English Church. The Church of England had two sites, one beyond old Government House hill about a mile away from the beach, and the other near the town. The Church on the hill had been demolished some years before

and its concrete cruciform floor made an excellent bakery for the troops. The other was in the line of battle. The Priest, a Chinese, lived near by and he had removed the valuable Church plate for safely to his house. The bombardment forced him and his family to seek shelter elsewhere, and when he returned after the battle, he found his house destroyed and everything looted. Church plate which had survived three years of enemy occupation disappeared that first Sunday morning,

At the other end of the town was a Chinese temple. A Chinese priest was in charge and he would have fled during the bombardment, but that he was too ill to move. The tiled roof fell in, and when the troops found him they took him to their hearts. They camped in the tepikong amongst the ruins beneath the ugly faces of the heathen gods and nursed the priest back to health, stuffing him daily with sausages and milk They called him Charley.

Everyone on the island must have known that the assault was imminent Leaflets had been dropped warning the inhabitants in the central and northern part of the island to keep clear of the Japanese and to stay where they were, but calling former civil servants to join the army. These orders had been drafted with full conciousness of the dangers which would be involved in carrying them out. The mens' lives might be forfeited at once and they would have to make their way through both the Japanese and the Australian lines. The clerks, dressers, demarcators, inter-

preters and police were urgently needed and they responded to the call. It was inevitable that many civilians would lose their lives in such a rain of bombs, bullets and shells, and about fifty civilians unhappily lost their lives in the bombardment. A typical case was that of a son of a former civil servant. He sat at a distance from his house watching the scene, when a shell hit his house killing all his relatives in it. He joined a volunteer labour force in the town and made no complaint.

The troops extended the narrow perimeter as fast as they could in the face of the fire put up by about five hundred Japanese defenders, but it was not fast enough to satisfy the demands for space behind them. Hundreds of vehicles were coming ashore and the airforce landed a thousand tons of machinery to repair the airfield. The crews were expert in the task of unloading ships with speed, for they had done this kind of work elsewhere on other beaches. The congestion grew and the light coral roads sufficient for the island's normal needs were crushed into mud under the strain put upon them.

Conditions permitted this crowding, because all enemy air strength had been systematically reduced before the assault. Air supremacy over the harbour and the beach was absolute, otherwise such a fleet of ships and such a mass of material could not have been collected in face of the enemy. For weeks before, every Japanese base within range of Labuan was blanketed with bombs. The airplanes on them were destroyed.

The airstrips were pounded day and night to force the enemy to give up hope of even keeping them in repair. No Japanese airplane could leave the ground within range of Labuan.

The Labuan airfield was pitted with shell holes, but it was essential to seize it at once and put it into order with the help of powerful machines designed for the purpose. Airplanes overhead must make a landing and the attack on the mainland must be developed. So the airfield was the first objective.

The Japanese, like everybody else on the island, knew that the attack was coming, but they were in no condition to put up a stiff resistance. This was partly due to the many long forced marches which they made when the allies delivered feint attacks elsewhere. The allies commanded the sea routes round the Borneo coasts, so the Japanese must move overland. A march from Weston to Sandakan took a month and from Jesselton to Tawau took six weeks. Some prisoners said they had recently marched to Sandakan at the time of a feint attack, and when they reached that town, they were immediately marched back again They were exhausted. Many had fallen sick. Many villages on the route were in ruins by bombing from allied planes. They often slept in the jungle. Much equipment had been abandoned. Hospital tents in the Padas Gorge above Beaufort were still crowded with sick stragglers. Those that marched through were in no condition to fight, when the real assault began. A few approached with white flags or

surrender-leaflets to give themselves up, and others hid grenades in their clothing and blew both themselves and their captors to pieces. Those wishing to surrender had to take off their clothes and walk forward naked with their hands upraised. There were over five thousand Japanese troops in Jesselton, but the railway had been destroyed and they could not reinforce the defenders in Labuan.

It must have been thirsty work in Labuan on that Sunday morning. At sea level the air is oppressive and there must have been many dry throats. The water supply was a serious difficulty. The reservoir at the back of Government House hill had not been damaged, but at the town end the pipes and tanks were destroyed. The water catchment area was pitted and holed with craters, which were full of muddy water and drained into the reservoir. Some fierce fighting developed in that area and with two or three hundred Japanese corpses lying in the blazing sun, the reservoir water was obviously unfit for use.

Bore holes were sunk at once, but it was known that holes on the level would meet foul water. Vast quantities of chlorine were used. Three scoops of chlorine to a given quantity of water is a fairly large dose, but at Labuan ten scoops of chlorine were used at first and it was long before this could be reduced to four.

No liquor was brought in that Sunday morning. The army had to wait a month, which must have seemed to some the longest thirst they had ever known. When at last a ship brought in 48,000

bottles of beer, the consignment allowed one bottle to each of thirty thousand men, and the rest of the bottles were put aside to await the arrival of more to make up another ration.

In spite of it all, and as a tribute to the overwhelming attack, there was only one casualty in the landing. Someone slipped and broke his leg. As fighting in the central part of the island developed, casualties begin to come in, but of the hundreds of Australian graves on the cliffs at Labuan, only a fraction was incurred in the attack that morning.

Labuan people have an affection for the sea. To the sea they look for their livelihood and from the sea came their salvation. If the relief had not come on the 10th June few might have been left to welcome the relieving army. The Japanese were organising a massacre and even the eleventh might have been too late.

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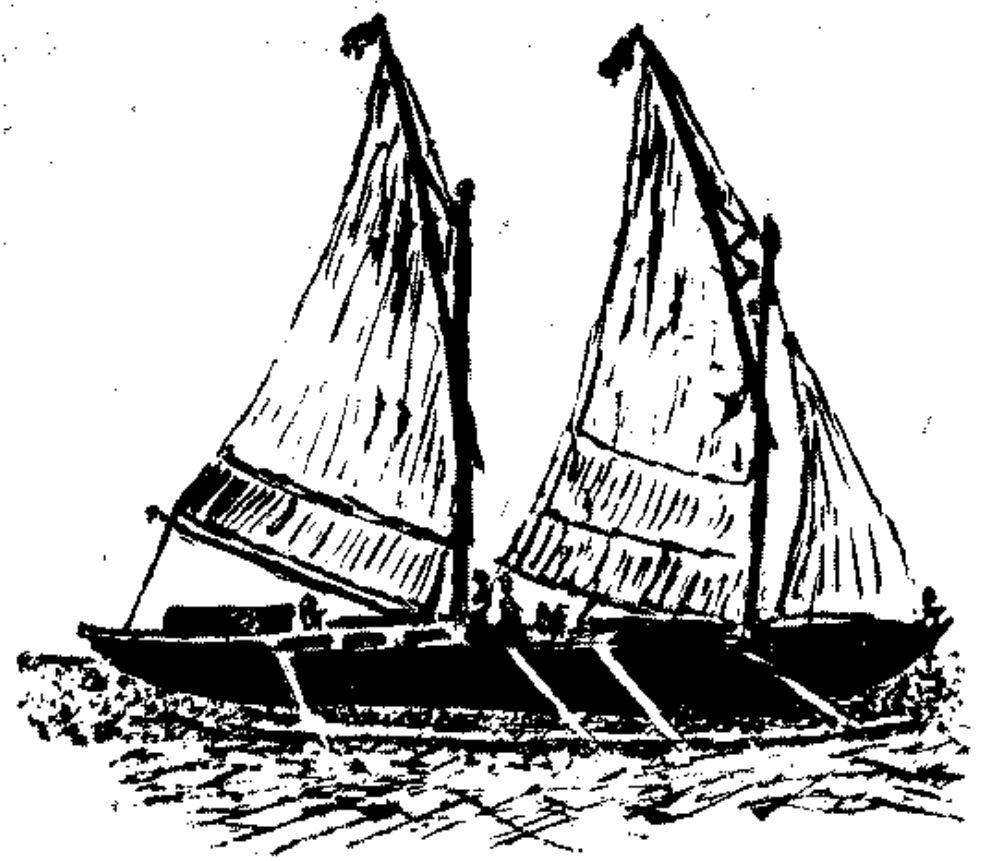

Modern Raider with Outriggers

Two or three Outboard Motors are put over the side to increase speed

Major General Wootten assumed control of all territory taken back from the enemy, proclaimed martial law, and cancelled all orders and regulations issued by the Japanese during their occupation. The old treaty of cession revived and Labuan again became a British Colony-under military administration. The Japanese stone of Victory was overthrown and the two granite slabs, recovered from the refuse dump, were re-erected.

The year of recovery was 1945, and next year marked the centenary. On Christmas Eve 1845 the ceremony of annexation had taken place, and punctually on Christmas Eve one hundred years later. a warship of the Royal Navy was present.

On this occasion the ceremony was less colourful. There were no crimson or yellow umbrellas.

Where H. M. Ships *Iris* and *Wolf* had saluted the annexation, H. M. S. *Alert,* a destroyer with four-inch guns, saluted the commemoration of one hundred years of history.

Labuan, if it has not fulfilled every hope expected of it in half a dozen spheres, has not wholly failed in any one of them. More aircraft and ships pass in and out of Labuan than in and out of any other port in Borneo.

Chinese towkeys with their quaint imagery and cute but callous outlook compare Labuan with a crab whose claws are fastened on the trade in rivers round Brunei Bay. Cut his claws and the crab will die.

Labuan lost its position as a free port when it was joined to the territory of North Borneo to form one colony with it. The crab let a great advantage slip from his pincers, but there is no knowing on what picking he may yet lay his claws for Labuan after ten years lapse is again a free port.

APPENDIX

A list of early Governors of Labuan

Date	Name
1848	Sir James Brooke
1850	John Scott
1856	George Warren Edwardes
1862	Jeremiah Thomas Fitzgerald Callaghan
1868	John Pope-Hennessy
1871	Henry E. Bulwer
1876	H. J. Ussher
1879	Charles Cameron Lee
1881-1889	Lieutenant Governors were appointed:— Hugh Low, A. S. Hamilton, and William Hood Treacher.

A list of Sultans of Brunei since 1807

Date of accession	Name
1807	Mohamed Khan Zul Alam
1815	Mohamed Alam, known as Rajah Api
1828	Omar Ali Saifuddin II
1852	Abdul Mumin
1885	Hashim Jalil-ul-Alam
1906	Mohamed Jemal-ul-Alam
1924	Ahmed Tajudin
1950	Omar Ali Saifuddin III

A listof Anglican Bishops of Labuan

Date	Name	Diocese
1848	Francis McDougall	Labuan & Sarawak
1870	Walter Chambers	Singapore, Labuan & Sarawak
1881	Frederick Hose	Singapore, Labuan & Sarawak
1909	Robert Mounsey	Labuan & Sarawak
1917	Logie Danson	Labuan & Sarawak
1932	Noel Hudson	Labuan & Sarawak
1938	Francis Hollis	Labuan & Sarawak
1949	Nigel Cornwell	Borneo

Two recent Books, recording part of the history of Labuan are:—
Nineteenth-Century Borneo, by Graham Irwin, Donald Moore, Singapore, 1955.
James Brooke of Sarawak, by Emily Hahn, Barker, London, 1953.