About the Author

Manxman Peter Clague was born in 1920 and educated at King William's College in the Isle of Man. He celebrated his 21st birthday as a second lieutenant on a troopship bound for India, being seconded to the Indian Army. In 1943 he was promoted to captain in the Intelligence Corps, and in 1945 to major on the staff of Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia. Major Clague served on the staff of the Judge Advocate-General South East Asia from 1947 to 1949, when he was appointed as a magistrate in the Singapore government. In 1952 he was selected for the new post of Police Secretary, Singapore. During his six years as Police Secretary, Clague's duties included public relations, and he made a series of weekly broadcasts of true crime stories under the title Police File, some of which were later published in newspapers and magazines. From 1958 until his retirement in 1970 he was employed as a public relations expert, first for the Shell Company, and then for British American Tobacco. Peter Clague, a widower with one son and one daughter, now lives in Kuala Lumpur. He is also the author of *Iron Spearhead*, the story of a communist cell in Singapore during the Malayan Emergency, and *Bridge House*, the chilling true story of a Shanghai chamber of horrors.

For Fenella

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune . . .

Shakespeare
Julius Caesar

JOHN RUSSELL

1855–1930 ■ A tale of early days in the Malay States.

Peter Clague

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Preface

This is largely an account of the life of John Russell after he came to Kuala Lumpur in 1890 accompanied by his wife and five small sons. His early years in Malaya are of particular interest because they reveal a great deal about Victorian family life in the tropics. In the course of his own lifetime John Russell experienced a time of numbing tragedy, contrasting with days of deep satisfaction. His character has been well illuminated by family letters, never previously published, which are reproduced here through the co-operation of his descendants. Some notable events in earlier Malaysian history are also included as a background to the family's story.

Historically, John Russell's name will always be associated with the *Selangor Journal*, the country's first news magazine.

The *Selangor Journal* was a fortnightly publication first issued in September, 1892, and published regularly for the next five years. In the absence of newspapers, the Journal is our most reliable source of accurate information about everyday life in Selangor, and in the embryo town of Kuala Lumpur, during that period. Throughout its existence, the magazine was edited by John Russell.

John, popularly known as 'Jack', was the Government Printer for Selangor State, having been won over by the Crown Agents from his employment with the *Illustrated London News*, a publication renowned for the excellence of its printing and contents.

During his apprenticeship, the future Government Printer and his companions were taught the technicalities of printed English. Not all his colleagues, however, developed the same regard for the language as John Russell. He became an avid reader, a competent writer and a keen lover of history. As an enthusiastic practitioner of fine printing, and a skilful user of English, he was recognised as the ideal choice to be Editor of the *Journal*.

The work of the Editor was unpaid, as were articles by contributors. The Editor was expected to find authoritative articles, as well as items of news, largely through his own endeavours. Far from being an easy assignment, in a population of only a few hundred English-speaking inhabitants, and with a paucity of writing talent, the Editor's task was daunting.

Besides contributions by Government officials, the *Journal* included news and articles from civilian planters and businessmen. Although these items were often of lasting interest, many required rewriting or editing, and usually involved correspondence with the contributors: tasks which John Russell had time to tackle only in out-of-office hours. However, he never regarded this extra work as a burden, and maintained his unflagging enthusiasm during the entire life of the *Journal*.

Although this account does not attempt to follow the careers of John's five sons, the businesses established by one of these, J. Archie Russell, continue to flourish in modern Malaysia. These include the property and estate firm of J.A. Russell & Company, and the highly successful tea business of Boh Plantations.

My researches for this book have been greatly assisted by Mr T.B. Russell, John Russell's grandson, and by Miss Claire Grey, also a descendant. I am further indebted to Datin Zakiah Hanum, Director-General of the National Archives, Malaysia, and her staff, for their unfailing help in tracing Government records. My thanks are also due to Mr Richard Hughes, of Leeds University, for his valuable suggestions in matters of wording, and to Mrs. Ann Toh for her patience and care in typing the manuscript and to Mrs Mindy Tong who transcribed the manuscript onto computer discs and who helped in innumerable other ways in putting everything together. I would also like to thank Robyn Russell, wife of the current-day John Russell (great-grandson of the subject of this book) for editing and proof reading.

PETER CLAGUE

Kuala Lumpur
January 1992

Editor's Note:

It is noted with regret that Peter Clague passed away shortly after this Preface was written, and did not see his valuable contribution to the history of Malaya go to print. This book remains as a tribute to his tenacity and love of Malaysia, as his adopted homeland of Malaya has now become.

R.A. RUSSELL

Contents

Prospects

1

On Guy Fawkes' night 1889, the inhabitants of New Malden, a village on the outskirts of London, gathered to watch a display of fireworks provided by one of their neighbours. Among these spectators stood a tall robust man named John Russell — known to his friends as 'Jack' — who thoughtfully stroked his handle-bar moustache whilst keeping a careful eye on the excited children around him.

John Russell, a printer employed by the *Illustrated London News*, then aged thirty-four, lived in New Malden with his wife, Frances, and their five sons, whose ages ranged from two months to ten years.

From one of John's letters, written long afterwards, it is clear that he never forgot this night of 1889. He had recently been approached by a representative of the Crown Agents for the Colonies, named Dishman, who had offered him a job as the Foreman Printer for the State of Selangor in Malaya; even as he watched the fireworks, John was seriously considering this offer.

John Russell was born on 16th January 1855, at 115, Nichols Square, Shoreditch, London. On his birth certificate, his father's name was given as 'John William Russell, Foreign Commission Agent', and his mother as 'Jessie Russell, formerly Smart'.

John's mother, Jessie, was the eldest daughter of Elizabeth Dearie, nee Hogg; for most of her life the wife of a Scotsman, Richard Dearie. It is likely, however, that Elizabeth had previously taken the name of a sailor named Smart, and that Jessie was the child of that union: hence the entry on John's birth certificate. In any event, Jessie had been brought up in Richard Dearie's household with several younger children, whom she always regarded as her brothers and sisters.

No marriage certificate for the marriage of Jessie Smart to John William Russell has ever been traced nor has any other record of him been found. Whether he really was the father of her son John or whether Jessie used a ficticious name on the birth certificate will probably never be known for certain. The family story is that her stepfather, Richard Dearie, was the father (see Appendix). Whatever the truth of the matter Jessie called herself Mrs. Russell after the birth of her son.

John Russell was born in the middle of Queen Victoria's reign, when nearly a quarter of the world's population belonged to the British Empire. The Crimean war had just ended and it was a time of comparative peace abroad. In England, however, there was enormous social change, with riots taking place over the right to vote, which was only extended to working men in towns when John was 12. It was the London of Charles Dickens and if you survived a cholera epidemic, and you weren't poor it was an exciting time to grow up.

John Russell, Government Printer and Editor of The Selangor Journal.

Many inventions were made or put into wider use during his youth, including iron steamships, typewriters, the telephone, phonograph and bicycle. Also introduced were new machines for composing printers' type which brought down the cost of newspapers, just at the time when compulsory schooling meant that more people could read them.

At some stage during John's childhood there is reason to think he may have been sent to stay with relatives in the small town of Blair Gowrie in Scotland. Later in life, John recalled seeing the heights of Killiekrankie in the highlands above Blair Gowrie (see Appendix).

Where he went to school has not been discovered, but the Apprenticeship Memorandum books of the Stationers and Newspaper Makers Company of the City of London record that on 5th October 1869 when he was 14 years of age 'John Russell son of William Russell, late of Hackney, Estate Agent was apprenticed to George Andrew Spottiswoode of New Street Square for 7 years — no money (As Compositer).'

During his apprenticeship, John Russell proved to be an apt and conscientious student: besides mastering the usual skills of type-setting with different species of type, printing, lay-out, block-making and book-binding, he attained a remarkable competence in the correct use of English, which greatly enhanced his value as a young compositor. He was also an avid student of history.

Towards the end of his period of training, when he was about 20, John and his mother took lodgings in a boarding-house at 64, Waterloo Road, Lambeth. One of the landlord's daughters, Frances Sophia Webster, John's future wife, was also living there.

From early photographs, Frances appears to have been a young woman of slightly more than average height, with a strong face and somewhat deep-set eyes. She could be described as handsome rather than beautiful. Frances was a book-keeper, and her father, Walter Webster, a clerk. At that time, clerks were invariably men of some education — usually from respectable middle-class backgrounds. Apart from her father, Frances is known to have had at least two other relatives: a married sister with two children who lived in Peckham, and an uncle who was a newspaper reporter, also a prestigious profession in those days.

It is likely that John and Frances were in love even during his apprenticeship, but marriage would have been out of the question until he found a regular job. Their marriage was registered on 16th August 1879, when John was twenty-four, and Frances twenty-one. They continued to live in the same boarding-house, their first child George being born there on 23rd November, in the same year.

John's elder sons, George and Archie Russell, with their mother Frances. Taken in Weymouth sometime in the 1880s before the other children had been born and before the family came to Selangor.

Sadly, John's mother Jessie was then suffering from incurable tuberculosis. She died on 14th June, 1880, aged only forty-seven, with Frances nursing her to the end. During her last months, Jessie at least had the satisfaction of knowing that her grandson had been named George 'Dearie' Russell, possibly in honour of the family in which she had spent her childhood years, or perhaps for the reason considered in the Appendix.

Not long after Jessie's death, John, his wife and infant moved to another boarding-house at 28, Westminster Bridge Road, where their second son John Archibald, was born on 11th November 1882.

Meanwhile, John and Frances had kept in touch with some of John's relatives of the Dearie and Hogg families and their children. In 1883, aged twenty-eight, John and Frances moved to New Malden in Surrey. One of John's aunts was living in that village, and it was no doubt as a result of family visits that they decided to quit the drab boarding-houses of the metropolis and move into the countryside. The house which John rented in New Malden bore the somewhat pretentious name of 'South View Villa'; John, however, described it as a 'cottage'.

This move, although it involved daily train journeys for John, brought important advantages: fresh air, natural surroundings, more living space, and better amenities for children. It also reflected John's growing standing as a printer; the *Illustrated London News*, always one of Britain's more prestigious publications, set exacting standards, and the fact that John was then a member of its printing staff speaks highly for his ability.

The family's years in New Malden were marked by the arrival of three more children, all boys: Philip Charles, born on 24th July 1884, Donald Oscar, born on 7th August 1887, and finally, Robert Cecil, born on 5th September 1889 — just two months before the village fireworks display.

Although John, now thirty-four, was immensely proud of his wife and five young children, he probably found that his large family cost every penny of his weekly wages, and his chances of early promotion on the *Illustrated London News* may have seemed remote. Whatever his reasons, John had listened attentively to Mr Dishman's proposition.

Dishman was the permanent adviser to the Crown Agents on all matters relating to printing in the Colonies. He combined a long and practical experience of printing with a shrewd perception of the type of man needed for supervisory duties overseas. He was considerably older than John Russell and, with his straightforward approach and expert knowledge, he quickly gained John's confidence. Dishman also appeared to be acquainted with details of John's entire career, right from the days of his apprenticeship. After a brief introduction, they agreed to meet again.

From occasional references which he would have seen in the *Illustrated London News*, John probably had a fair idea of the whereabouts of Malaya. He would almost certainly have read about the Straits Settlements, which were mainly the ports of Singapore, Malacca and Penang; it is doubtful whether he knew much about their hinterland, and even more doubtful whether he had ever heard of Selangor, which Mr Dishman had described as a Malay state about two hundred miles north of Singapore.

At this stage, John Russell was probably wondering whether that distant tropical country could ever seriously be considered a suitable place for his wife and five small children — including a babe in arms. What about black-water fever, beriberi, cholera, malaria, yellow fever, and all the other

fatal diseases said to be rife in the tropics? What about wild animals and deadly snakes? And what about the childrens' education?

As John watched the multi-coloured rockets and whirling Catherine-wheels, these and a thousand other questions no doubt flashed through his mind, although he had probably not mentioned Mr Dishman's offer to anyone — perhaps not even to Frances — to avoid raising either hopes or fears.

As a result of further meetings with Mr Dishman, some of John's worst misgivings were gradually dispelled. He was assured that there were a number of British families already living in Kuala Lumpur — the principal town of Selangor — where he would be stationed. Apart from government officers, there were British traders, mechanics, shopkeepers and employees on nearby coffee plantations. There were kindergarten schools for European infants in Kuala Lumpur, and at least one boarding school for older children in Singapore. Apparently, the climate of Kuala Lumpur — though, of course, tropical — was described as humid, but not much hotter than that of a good English summer. Naturally, there were no winters, and nights were warm. In general, however, Kuala Lumpur was considered to be a healthy place: there had been few serious cases of either malaria or cholera among the Europeans, and no recorded cases of beriberi, black-water or yellow fever.

Mr Dishman confirmed that there were indeed wild animals in the jungles of Malaya, including elephants, bison, bears and even tigers, but he said that these were seldom encountered in the orderly streets and gardens of Kuala Lumpur. He added that dangerous snakes were not usually found in residential areas.

Apart from reassuring John about life in Malaya, Dishman stressed some of the advantages which the proposed job offered. In pounds sterling, at the prevailing rate of exchange, John's salary would be almost four times his present pay: more than he could ever hope to get in the United Kingdom, even as a foreman. In addition, he would be provided with a government house for himself and his family or an adequate rent allowance if a government house was not available. His initial contract would be for only three years, after which they could return to England if John so wished; passages both ways would be paid by the government. If, at the end of three years, John decided to remain in Selangor government service, and if his conduct had been satisfactory, he would be placed on the government's permanent establishment and be entitled to a pension at the end of his working life — something which no printer in England could expect!

In those high days of the Empire, the mere offer of a government job in the colonies was itself considered to be a considerable compliment. Chosen only after searching enquiries, potential recruits were expected to embody the highest standards of morality and trustworthiness. They were also expected to perform their duties with something approaching missionary zeal. No doubt John Russell was conscious of the compliment — and of the expectations. The offer presented an honourable and rewarding challenge which John would have accepted without hesitation if he had not had his family to consider.

However, if Frances had strong objections to the proposed move, John would have declined the Crown Agents' offer. The idea of dragging an unwilling

wife half-way round the world, with five small children, would have been utterly repugnant to him. Happily, after John had explained the pros and cons as impartially as he could, Frances agreed that this was a golden opportunity which should not be missed.

With that major obstacle behind him, John told Mr Dishman that he would accept the new job, and it was arranged that together they would go to the Crown Agents' offices, in Downing Street, for John to sign his contract with Her Majesty's Government.

At that time, the majority of British subjects would never have heard of Downing Street. Even Londoners would have associated the street more with government offices than with the somewhat dingy residence of the First Lord of the Treasury — an office not always combined with that of Prime Minister. At the beginning of 1890, the occupant of Number Ten was Mr W. H. Smith, the son of a successful London bookseller, who was indeed First Lord of the Treasury, but never Prime Minister.

Thus on 6th January 1890, when John Russell, accompanied by Mr Dishman, paid his first visit to Downing Street, they would have taken little notice of Number Ten. They went to a quite different building: the offices of the Crown Agents for the Colonies.

Inside this building, they were ushered into the office of Mr Ernest Edward Blake, one of Her Majesty's Crown Agents. Having been introduced to Mr Blake, John was handed three copies of an Agreement which he was invited to read carefully, and to sign if he agreed to its terms. Each copy of this document consisted of four handwritten foolscap sheets. The copperplate lettering was of a standard which John may have seldom seen except in the pages of printed copy-books. He found his own name already handsomely inscribed :

Dated 6th January 1890.

The Crown Agents
for the Colonies.

— and —

John Russell.

Agreement

R 167 app.

Agreement made this sixth day of January One thousand eight hundred and ninety **Between** The Undersigned One of the Crown Agents for the Colonies of Downing Street London in the County of Middlesex acting for and on behalf of the Government of the State of Selangor hereinafter called the Government of the one part and John Russell of South View Villa Elm Road New Malden in the County of Surrey of the other part

Whereby it is agreed by and between the parties hereto as follows:-

1 The said John Russell shall be and is hereby appointed Foreman Printer in the Government Printing Office of the State of Selangor on the following terms and conditions.

2 The term of service of the said John Russell under this Agreement shall be for Three years commencing from the date of arrival in Selangor but it will be open to the Government to offer him re-employment or to make the appointment a permanent one if it should think fit

3. The duties to be discharged by the said John Russell shall be the taking charge of all plant and stores of the Selangor Government Printing Office the distribution direction and supervision of the work of the Compositors, Pressmen and Bookbinders and the maintenance of order and discipline in the Printing Office. He shall also himself assist generally in the Composing room, read "first" proofs &c and shall take all his orders as to Printing from the head of his Department.

4. The Salary to be paid to the said John Russell shall be One hundred and twenty five dollars ($125) per mensem to commence from the date of arrival in Selangor half salary being allowed during the passage out free quarters will also be provided or a house allowance of Fifteen dollars a month in lieu thereof.

5. The Government shall furnish the said John Russell with free second class passages to Singapore and thence to Selangor for himself and his family and with return passages at the expiration of the said term of Three years if his services are then dispensed with and provided his conduct shall have been satisfactory during his engagement and that he leaves for England within two months from the termination of his engagement.

6. If the said John Russell shall fail to proceed to Selangor or within the period of Three years from the date of his arrival in the said State either quit the said State without leave or relinquish his appointment or be dismissed or removed from his appointment in consequence of misconduct he shall refund and repay to the Government or to the Crown Agents for the Colonies in London for the time being the amount paid for the passages of himself and family to Selangor.

Provided always that nothing herein contained shall bind or oblige the said John Russell to repay such passage money if at the time he shall relinquish his appointment or quit the service of the Government he shall produce to the Government a certificate signed by the proper Medical Officer to the effect that he is unable from bodily or mental infirmity to continue in the performance of his duties.

7. The said John Russell shall faithfully and diligently employ the whole of his time in the service of the Government in such manner as the Government or any duly authorised Officer of the Government shall require and if he shall at any time neglect or refuse or from any cause become unable to comply with all or any of the Articles of this Agreement or any of the duties required

of him or all or any of the orders of the Government or any Officer duly authorised in that behalf or shall correspond verbally or otherwise directly or indirectly on matters in respect of which he is employed by the Government with any person or persons except as duly authorised or shall publish directly or indirectly any document or information of any kind whatsoever connected with such matters as aforesaid or shall in any manner misconduct himself it shall be competent to the Government to suspend the said John Russell from his Office and Salary and allowances (if any) and it shall be competent to the Government to declare the employment of the said John Russell under this Agreement at an end as from the date of such suspension for all or any of such causes and upon such determination of the employment of the said John Russell the Government shall not be under any obligation to provide the said John Russell with passages to England.

8. The Crown Agents for the Colonies shall not be in anywise personally liable for anything arising out of this Agreement.

As witness the hands of the parties.

Signed by Ernest Edward Blake (One of the Crown Agents for the Colonies) in the presence of — E E Blake

Of Witness:
Name: W Standrishham
Address: Downing St
Occupation: London S.W.

Signed by the said John Russell in the presence of — John Russell

Of Witness:
Name: H Martin
Address: Downing St.
Occupation: S.W.

9. The said John Russell agrees to make no claim on the said Government or on the Crown Agents for the Colonies in respect of the fluctuation in the value of the dollar.

J. Russell.

E E Blake

Witness
WS

John and Mr Blake signed all copies of the document and their signatures were witnessed by two clerks from an adjacent office. As requested, John signed boldly across the face of Queen Victoria on a sixpenny revenue stamp.

The agreement was interesting in several respects. Having been made 'for and on behalf of the Government of the State of Selangor', it may, unwittingly, have given the impression that Selangor was indeed a British colony. In fact, Selangor was an independent State ruled by a Sultan, with the assistance of a British Resident, an arrangement initiated sixteen years previously in 1874. In practice, the Resident ran the administration, only nominally subject to the Sultan's approval. Since 1874, similar arrangements had also been made in the States of Perak, Sungei Ujong, and Pahang.

Similarly, Paragraph 3 of the Agreement gave the impression that the State of Selangor was already equipped with a Government Printing Office, complete with plant, stores, compositors, pressmen, bookbinders, and a Head of Department who would give John Russell his orders. In fact, there was no Head of Department, no Printing Department, no Government Printing Office, nor any staff.

The additional Paragraph 9 was not immediately applicable to John: it had already been agreed that he would be paid in Straits Settlements' dollars with no exchange rate involved.

No doubt some of these niceties would have been discussed with John, either by Mr Blake, or by Mr Dishman. He was told that all previous *Government Gazettes* for Selangor had been printed by the Government Printer of the Straits Settlements in Singapore — two hundred miles away. Now, however, at the request of the British Resident in Selangor, it had been agreed that future Selangor *Gazettes* would be printed in Kuala Lumpur, and that John would have the task of setting up a suitable Printing Department. As there was, at present, no Head of Department, he would for the time being take his orders directly from the British Resident — the most senior British Officer in the State.

All this would have delighted John Russell; it was every printer's dream to set up his own print-shop and to select his own staff. It was not in his nature to consider that the Crown Agents were getting a Head of Department, as least temporarily, at the price of a foreman. However, John probably asked about his new master — the British Resident of Selangor. He would have been told that this very senior position was then held by Mr William Edward Maxwell, CMG, who had spent his whole career in the Straits Settlements and in the hinterland of Malaya. Apart from this, John was told that he would be able to trace the whole of Mr Maxwell's history by examining previous *Government Gazettes* of the Straits Settlements.

John was informed that passages had been booked for himself and his family on a ship due to leave London at the beginning of February, 1890, so the time for his induction was necessarily short. Dishman would have realized that his new recruit was a man of considerable intelligence, and he was probably content to introduce John to the library of the Colonial Office, where he could study the *Gazettes* and other references to Malaya.

(By courtesy of the National Archives of Malaysia).

Other officials helped with more personal matters: clothing, including the names of reputable colonial outfitters; packing, including advice on 'cabin luggage', and what should be stowed in the ship's hold until disembarkation; tickets; and, finally, money. John was given an advance of twenty pounds, to prepare for the journey and to cover expenses on board. Since this was a large sum — possibly more than John had ever handled at one time in his life — he and Frances would have managed it with extreme care. Over the following weeks, in addition to studying his new appointment, the Russell house was cleared, children prepared and farewells made.

Land of Promise

2

The days which followed the signing of his contract must have been among the most exciting of John's career. He had achieved his promotion at a fairly young age and he had been given a superb opportunity to set up his own printing-press. In addition, he could hardly have failed to notice that now he was being treated as a gentleman.

No longer merely 'Jack', compelled to wear a workman's overalls, he was now 'Mr John Russell: a gentleman who is about to take up a responsible position with the Government of the State of Selangor'. It would have been in these terms that Mr Dishman introduced him to the respectful librarian in the Colonial Office archives.

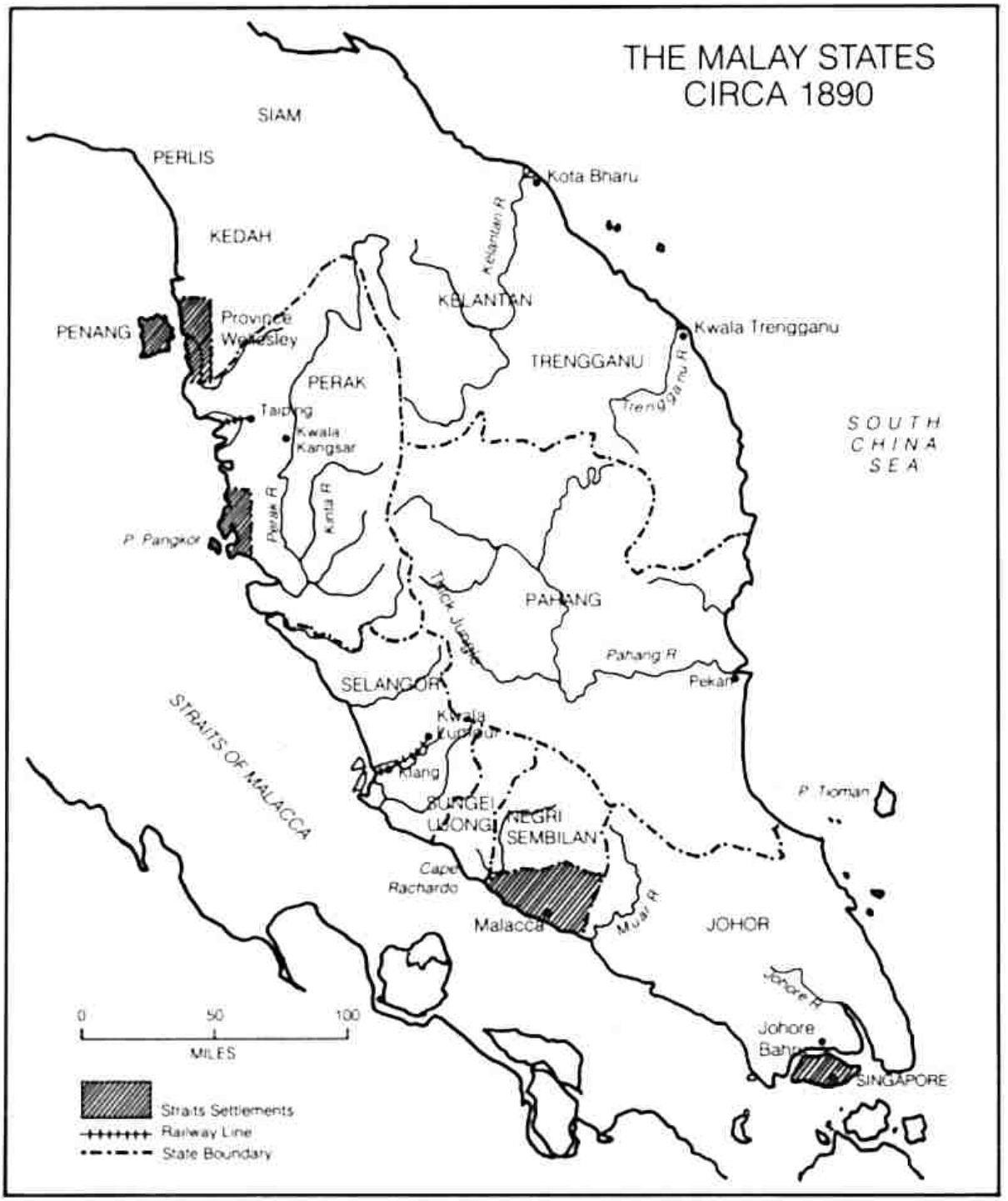
In these archives, John was able to examine outlines of the geography and history of the country which would be his home for at least the next three years. The archives contained the printed *Gazettes* of the Straits Settlements and numerous handwritten reports together with hand-drawn maps of their hinterland. Although printed maps of Malaya existed at that time, they were inaccurate and lacking in detail because the territory had never been comprehensively surveyed.

Looking at the peninsula of Malaya on these maps, John found that the British territories of Singapore and Penang, and the enclave of Malacca, appeared almost insignificant; indeed, the bulbous hinterland looked huge by comparison. Only one state, Johore, straddled the peninsula — in the extreme south. Singapore island lay just off its southern coast.

North of Johore state, on the eastern side and facing the South China Sea, were the states of Pahang, Trengganu, and Kelantan. On the western side, north of the Johore boundary, was the small territory of Malacca, with 'Sungei Ujong' on its borders. The lands marked Sungei Ujong were covered in what looked like drawings of crazy paving stones, evidently smaller political divisions which the cartographers had left unnamed. As one moved northwards up the west coast, Sungei Ujong was followed by Selangor, Perak, Kedah and finally Perlis in the extreme north, all facing west to the Malacca Straits. The island of Penang, with a foothold on the mainland named Province Wellesley, lay off the coast of southern Kedah.

John saw that nearly all the states contained at least one major river, most of them rising near the central spine of the peninsula and flowing down to the east and west coasts. Clearly, although no individual mountains were named, the backbone of the country was mountainous or at least hilly. The few settlements which were marked lay on or near to the rivers. Very few roads or tracks were visible and the rivers appeared to form the main lines of communication within each state.

Naturally, John's attention was next focused on Selangor.


THE MALAY STATES
CIRCA 1890
SIAM
PERLIS
KEDAH
PENANG
Province Wellesley
PERAK
Taiping
Kwala Kangsar
P. Pangkor
Perak R.
Kunta R.
KELANTAN
Kelantan R.
Kota Bharu
TRENGGANU
Trengganu R.
Kwala Trengganu
SOUTH CHINA SEA
PAHANG
Tyck Jugra
Pahang R.
Pekan
SELANGOR
Kwala Lumpur
Klang
STRAITS OF MALACCA
SUNGEI UJONG
NEGRI SEMBILAN
Cape Rachado
Malacca
Muar R.
JOHOR
Johore R.
Johore Bahru
SINGAPORE
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0
50
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MILES
Straits Settlements
Railway Line
State Boundary

Selangor's greatest length of approximately a hundred miles, lay along the west coast. Its greatest width, of about forty miles, touched the western border of Pahang. No roads were marked between Selangor and Sungei Ujong to the south, or to Perak in the north — and there were certainly no roads into Pahang, that border being marked 'Thick Jungle'. Access to Selangor was by sea, through a port named Klang, at the mouth of a river of the same name. Klang was one of only two settlements named in the entire state, the other being Kuala Lumpur — then written as Kwala Lumpur — which lay about twenty-five miles inland on the Klang River. These two places were joined by a dotted track and a railway line. An area to the east of Kuala Lumpur was marked 'Tin Mines', which were the raison d'etre for the railway. The line had been opened in 1886, four years before John's visit to the library.

Only one other railway appeared on the maps. This lay in the neighbouring state of Perak and ran from the principal town — Taiping — to an unnamed point on the coast. Again,'Tin Mines' were marked near Taiping.

With these geographical outlines in mind, John Russell began to study the documents and Gazettes. He soon discovered that the history of the British in Malaya up to that time covered little more than a hundred years, and he resolved to learn as much of this as possible in the short time available to him. With the help of the librarian, he was able to trace some important milestones in the country's development.

John found that British involvement in the affairs of Malaya had begun in 1786 with Francis Light's occupation of Penang Island: the result of an agreement between Light, acting on behalf of the East India Company, and the Sultan of Kedah. It had not been until 1819, a little over thirty years later, that Singapore was founded by Sir Stamford Raffles, then Governor of Bencoolen in West Sumatra. The occupation of Singapore followed a similar agreement between the East India Company and the royal family of Johore. The islands of Penang and Singapore were both largely uninhabited at the time of their occupation by the British.

Meanwhile, the territory of Malacca, on the west coast of the peninsula, was in the hands of the Dutch. In 1824, however, Malacca was transferred to Britain in exchange for Bencoolen and Raffles went home. Singapore, Penang, and Malacca formed the main elements in the Straits Settlements, and came under the control of a British Governor appointed by the East India Company.

During these years of government from India, the ports of Penang and Singapore had developed rapidly. Singapore had become an increasingly important staging post for trade between China and Europe. Penang, on the other hand, eventually prospered largely because of Chinese immigrants working as tin miners in Perak. However, it was widely believed that, apart from tin, other Malay states could provide richly fertile land and precious metals, including gold.

Adapted from Sadka (1968). The Malay States, circa 1890.

In view of these possible advantages to British business, it may have seemed strange that successive governments in British India had resolutely refused to

sanction any expansion of British interests into the potentially rich states of Malaya, while they expanded their own authority to cover almost the entire sub-continent of India. It was hardly surprising that British and Chinese traders in the Straits Settlements had become increasingly dissatisfied — even angry — at this lack of government backing: however, they knew only too well that without naval and military support, no investment in the hinterland could be considered safe. Having read about this state of affairs, John was no doubt keen to find out how British rule had come to be entrenched in parts of Malaya, and he would have read the subsequent documents with increasing interest.

In handwritten records for 1857, the year of the Indian Mutiny, the states of Selangor and Perak were mentioned as haunts for pirates in the Malacca Straits. These were the earliest official references to the two states which John had seen. Having been born in 1855, two years before the Mutiny, he was intrigued to learn that many of the important developments in Malaya had happened within his own lifetime.

The first Straits Settlements government *Gazette* was published in 1858. It consisted of no more than a few pages, and had been printed by 'The Mission Press' in Singapore. Further research showed that from the beginning, *Gazettes* were issued weekly — a practice which continued in Singapore. John was interested not only in the typography of these Gazettes — their headings, lay-outs, typefaces and paper — but also in their contents. They were official records which included the postings of civil servants, new laws and regulations, taxes and tariffs, records of licences granted, and other details which provided the bare bones of history. He was perhaps mildly surprised to see that from early in their existence, the *Gazettes* also contained a smattering of commercial advertisements — presumably to help to defray the cost of printing, rather than to imply any governmental approval for the products advertised.

A major event had occurred in 1867 when, largely as a result of pressure from British and Chinese businessmen, the government of the Straits Settlements was transferred from India to the Colonial Office in London. Until this time, the Governors of the Straits Settlements had been a somewhat undistinguished lot, informal, and very much a part of the unsophisticated local society of European merchants and poorly paid civil servants — largely cast-offs from the Indian establishment or relatives of senior officers. The first Governor appointed from London was a very different type. He was Harry St. George Ord, who was also the first Governor of the Straits Settlements to be knighted in that office.

Although previous Governors had been appointed from India, the position of Chief Justice — which traditionally had carried a knighthood — had invariably been filled from London. In the year of Sir Harry Ord's appointment as Governor, the post of Chief Justice was given to Peter Benson Maxwell, who had already served in various legal offices in the Straits Settlements.

John Russell discovered that William Edward Maxwell, his future master in Selangor, was a son of this Chief Justice. Born in 1846, he had been educated at Repton, one of England's leading schools. When William left

school, his father had brought him to the Straits Settlements where he was employed as a clerk in the Supreme Court of Penang and Singapore. In 1867, the year in which his father became Chief Justice, he qualified as an advocate of the local bar. In 1869, at the age of twenty-three, William became a gazetted magistrate serving in various places in Singapore, Malacca, and Province Wellesley.

Sir Harry Ord soon made himself unpopular with Straits businessmen. They considered the new Governor to be too aloof, even arrogant. Shortly after his arrival in Singapore, he had built a substantial new Government House, complete with extensive outbuildings for his servants, horses, and carriages. All this, paid for out of public funds, was in marked contrast to the easy-going informality of previous Governors. Even more to the point, the businessmen of all nationalities had expected that transfer to the Colonial Office would result in the immediate approval of British intervention in the Malay States. However, there was no change, and for this they held Sir Harry Ord personally responsible. Perhaps they hoped, unrealistically, that he could influence the rigid views of Mr Gladstone, the Prime Minister, on the subject of Imperial expansion.

In 1870, James Wheeler Woodford Birch, formerly British Agent for the Eastern Provinces of Ceylon, arrived in Singapore to be Ord's new Colonial Secretary — a very senior position. A few months later, in January 1871, Frank Athelstane Swettenham, aged twenty, one of the new Colonial Cadets, also reached the island. The names of both these men figured prominently in the subsequent history of Malaya. John Russell read on.

In the year of Swettenham's arrival, pirates boarded a Chinese junk sailing from Penang to Singapore. The pirates killed thirty-four men, women, and children, and ships of the Royal Navy were immediately dispatched in search of the malefactors. The junk, with the pirates on board, was located off the coast of Selangor, but the pirates managed to flee ashore and escape. British sailors landed and destroyed some Malay forts and cannon. The Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Abdul Samad, no doubt fearing further repercussions from Singapore, wisely decided to have the pirates rounded up and sent to Malacca for trial by a British court.

Despite this action by the Sultan, the inevitable retribution duly arrived in the form of a British man-of-war bearing the new Colonial Secretary, J.W.W. Birch. The son of an English clergyman, Birch was evidently obsessed by the notion that his personal mission in life was to bring Victorian civilization to the rest of mankind. He wished to transform the ancient ways of the East into something nearer to his own aspirations. With complaints from British and Chinese traders about the difficulties of doing business in Selangor still ringing in his ears, Birch resolved to dictate terms to the Sultan.

Sultan Abdul Samad had been on the throne of Selangor since 1859, and was descended from a robust line of proud seafarers and fighters. Although some of the Sultan's relatives were even then engaged in warfare among themselves, the Sultan himself remained strictly neutral throughout all the family feuds, staying in the quiet coastal village of Langat, maintaining his own dignity and the respect of his subjects.

At his confrontation with the Sultan, Birch declared that a strong man was needed to run Selangor on Abdul Samad's behalf, and he bluntly proposed that the nominal Viceroy, one of the Sultan's sons-in-law, Tunku dia Udin, should be given this task. Naturally, the Sultan resented this impudent suggestion. He was, however, too polite to express his true feelings in the matter, and he reluctantly agreed that Tunku dia Udin should become the virtual ruler of Selangor — at least he would have rid himself of someone whom, in his view, must have been a most disrespectful Englishman.

Birch returned in triumph to Singapore, confident that he had eliminated any further trading difficulties with Selangor. He was soon to be disillusioned.

Tunku dia Udin, although most willing to assist his father-in-law to the best of his ability, quickly found that he lacked the necessary forces to suppress the warring factions in the state. He did, however, succeed in establishing a small garrison, a body commanded by two foreign mercenaries — an Italian and a Dutchman — in the mining settlement of Kuala Lumpur.

In the meantime, in Singapore, young Frank Swettenham had spent most of his time studying the Malay language, and at the beginning of 1872, Sir Harry Ord gave Swettenham permission to accompany a Singapore lawyer named J.G. Davidson on a trip to Kuala Lumpur. Davidson had already acquired a good knowledge of Malay, and was not only Tunku dia Udin's legal adviser, but was also involved in tin trading on his own behalf.

From Port Klang, these two Englishmen travelled by boat up the Klang River for three days before reaching Kuala Lumpur. They found the place largely in the hands of a Chinese businessman named Yap Ah Loy, who bore the title of 'Capitan China'. The settlement over which Yap Ah Loy presided could hardly have been described as a town: it consisted of thatched huts which Swettenham later called 'hovels'. On peering into an otherwise empty shack, Swettenham found the dead body of a Chinese man, with a bullet hole in his chest. . . .

Swettenham also noted that a prominent hill near the settlement named Bukit Nanas, had been turned into a fort by the Viceroy's new garrison.

Not long after Davidson and Swettenham left Kuala Lumpur, fierce fighting again erupted in Selangor. The Viceroy's enemies now concentrated on Bukit Nanas, where the garrison was besieged. In attempting to withdraw, most of these troops were surrounded and slaughtered, together with both their mercenary officers.

The Governor received petitions from British and Chinese businessmen in Malacca and Singapore, complaining that they had invested large sums in Selangor following Birch's supposedly successful peace efforts of the previous year. They received an uncompromising reply, signed on the Governor's behalf by none other than the Colonial Secretary:

> *'. . . if traders, prompted by the prospects of large gains, choose to run the risk of placing their persons and property in the jeopardy which they are aware attends them in these countries under present circumstances, it is impossible for Government to be answerable for their protection or that of their property.'*

After that, however, Sir Harry Ord took a more personal hand in the affairs of Selangor. Knowing that he could not send British forces to help the Viceroy, on pain of instant dismissal, he encouraged the Sultan of Pahang in sending some of his warriors to help Selangor. These Pahang fighters eventually succeeded in driving the Viceroy's enemies from Kuala Lumpur, although intermittent fighting continued in other parts of the state.

In November, 1873, Sir Harry Ord retired and returned to England. He remained unpopular to the end.

The new Governor was Sir Andrew Clarke, a distinguished military engineer with wide political contacts in London. Even before Sir Andrew set sail for Singapore, it was obvious that Gladstone's government was on a downward slide. In fact, the Liberals managed to survive until the beginning of 1874, when the Tories regained office and Disraeli once more became Prime Minister.

On the day of his departure, Sir Andrew Clarke's superior at the Colonial office gave him a written set of instructions which included the following portentous words:

> *'I should wish you specially to consider whether it would be advisable to appoint a British officer to reside in any of the States. Such an appointment could, of course, only be made with the full consent of the Native Government . . .'*

Sir Andrew was told to 'enquire' and 'report' on this suggestion.

At this point in his reading, John Russell was becoming aware that although the British had played some part in the affairs of Selangor, it was their intervention in the even more tangled politics of neighbouring Perak which led to the eventual establishment of the Residency system.

The district of Larut in northern Perak had become the richest tin mining area in Malaya, drawing investments from Chinese businessmen in the British settlement of Penang. Separated from the main valley of the Perak River by a range of jungle-covered mountains, Larut formed an almost independent part of the state.

Unfortunately, for many years there had been bitter rivalry between two Chinese groups for control of the mines: one, a predominantly Cantonese faction known as the Ghee Hin, the other predominantly Hokkien, called the Hai San. This rivalry had frequently resulted in armed clashes which had not always been confined to Larut; fighting had also broken out in the streets of Penang, causing fatalities.

In the past, the Mentri, or Malay official in charge of Larut, had become rich from the revenue derived from the mines, but by 1873, he had lost all control of the Chinese miners fighting in his territory. He had neither an army nor a police force, and the situation had deteriorated to such an extent that tin could no longer be mined or exported from Larut. The Hai San held the mines, ten miles from the coast, while the Ghee Hin held the river mouth. The unfortunate Mentri was now deep in debt. Eventually, he went to Penang to seek help from the British authorities. He was politely rebuffed.

At that time, the Superintendent of Police in Penang was Captain Tristram Speedy, a distinctly unusual man. Six feet five inches in height, of powerful build, and sporting a massive beard, he was indeed an impressive figure, and a most effective Superintendent of Police. Apart from his physical strength, Speedy also possessed considerable personal charm, and an enviable facility for acquiring the rudiments of foreign languages. Previously an officer in the Indian Army, he could speak Urdu fluently, and after only two years in Penang, he could speak some Malay and enough of the Chinese dialects to make himself understood and respected throughout the multi-racial population. Although he was the senior police officer in Penang, Speedy was not a pensionable member of the Malayan establishment.

The troubled Mentri now turned to Captain Speedy for help. He made him a most attractive offer: if Speedy would go to India, raise a fighting force, return to Larut and restore order, the Mentri would thereafter pay him a fantastic monthly salary from a share of the revived tin revenues!

However, although by nature something of an adventurer, Captain Speedy was no fool. He knew precisely how serious the situation in Larut had become, and the increasing danger of rioting in Penang. He also knew that Governor Ord's hands were tied by the policy of the British Government. At the same time, he was confident that with a small force of Indian troops of his own choosing, he could easily defeat the largely untrained fighters on both sides of the Chinese tin miners' conflict.

Sir Wm. Drummond Jervois, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, is seated in the middle of the group. Standing on his left, with his hand upon a sword, is Mr. J.W. Birch, the first British Resident of Perak, who was murdered in 1875: while the youthful figure leaning upon the banister on the extreme right of the picture is Mr. (afterwards Sir) Frank Swettenham. On the Governor's immediate right is Lieut (now Sir) Henry McCallum, then Assistant Colonial Engineer of the Straits Settlements, and next to him is Captain Innes, R.E., who was killed at the attack on the stockade at Pasir Salak in 1875. The tall bearded officer standing upon the steps is Captain Speedy of Abyssinia fame. (By courtesy of the Graham Brash (Pte) Ltd, Singapore)

After careful thought, and provided with funds which the Mentri had somehow managed to raise, Speedy resigned from his police appointment and left for India on 27th July 1873. There he recruited just over a hundred tough Punjabis and Pathans and bought some Krupp guns. Travelling with two steamships, and accompanied by fifteen sailing boats with stores, Speedy eventually landed on the coast of Larut at the end of September 1873. He avoided the mouth of the Larut river, still strongly held by the Ghee Hin fighters, and took up a tactical position roughly half-way between the opposing forces not far from the river. It happened that Mr A.E.H. Anson, the Lieutenant Governor of Penang, had been on leave at the time of Speedy's resignation. On his return, however, he strongly supported the ex-Superintendent's initiative, and he sent ships of the Royal Navy to blockade the mouth of the Larut river, to prevent further arms from reaching the combatants.

That was the situation when Sir Andrew Clarke became Governor, and, shortly after his arrival in Singapore, he sent his only Chinese-speaking British civil servant, a young man named Pickering, to Penang to try to persuade the opposing Chinese leaders to come to some kind of an agreement. The simultaneous appearance of Speedy's force in the centre of no man's land and the British Navy off the Larut coast had been welcomed with some relief by the combatants. Pickering found that the leaders of both factions in Penang thought that British intervention was the best thing that could happen, so that profitable mining could be resumed. They certainly did not wish to fight against Speedy, whom they respected, but they no longer trusted the Mentri. Pickering sent the Governor a message to that effect.

In Singapore, Sir Andrew Clarke made a bold decision: disregarding his instructions to 'inquire' and 'report', he resolved to take action. In January 1874, he arranged a meeting between all the interested parties to be held off the small island of Pangkor, not far north of the mouth of the Perak River — the principal artery of the state. Although the Governor had a clear plan in his mind, he realized that it would have to be approved by the Sultan. But who was the Sultan of Perak?

There appeared to be two main claimants to the Sultanate, and, although when he left Singapore it is likely that Sir Andrew was more concerned with settling the fighting in Larut than with becoming involved in the regal disputes of Perak, he knew that he would have to decide between these claimants.

It took some days for the various delegations to assemble at Pangkor, and conversations eventually began on 16th January on board the Governor's ship *Pluto*. During the next four days, the Governor interviewed the Mentri of Larut, the leaders of the Ghee Hin and Hai San factions, and the redoubtable Captain Speedy who had temporarily left his jungle fighters to be present. With suitable ceremony, Sir Andrew also met Raja Abdullah, who claimed to be the rightful Sultan of Perak.

Abdullah's rival, Raja Ismail, though invited, did not attend the conference; the Mentri, however, claimed to represent him. Three years earlier, Raja Ismail, whose headquarters lay more than fifty miles up the Perak River, had been elected as Sultan by a group of local chiefs supported by the then wealthy Mentri. Although not in the traditional line of succession, Ismail possessed the royal regalia of Perak — considered essential for anyone who wished to be regarded as Sultan. On the other hand, Raja Abdullah dominated the whole area of the river mouth, giving him effective control of imports and exports in the rest of the state.

In order to make a fair assessment between the rival claimants, Sir Andrew asked a Malay elder, reputed to be knowledgeable in such matters, to produce a genealogy of the Perak royal family, which was hastily translated into English by Frank Swettenham. After studying this family tree, and having made sure that Raja Abdullah would comply with his wishes, Sir Andrew declared that Raja Abdullah would be the Sultan. He wrote to Raja Ismail telling him that he was deposed, and that the royal regalia should be handed over to Raja Abdullah.

It was hardly surprising that Raja Ismail, in the security of his up-stream palace, was incredulous when informed that he had been summarily deposed by an unknown Englishman. Not unnaturally he declined to hand over the regalia, with the result that Raja Abdullah was never properly installed.

Nevertheless, overriding any niceties of protocol, Sir Andrew Clarke entered into a written Engagement with Raja Abdullah, which later became known as the 'Treaty of Pangkor'. Under the terms of this Treaty, Abdullah, as Sultan, agreed to accept the services of a British Resident who would be

> *'. . . accredited to his court, and whose advice must be asked and acted upon on all questions other than those touching Malay religion and customs'.*

The Mentri accepted, on identical terms, an Assistant Resident for Larut. The Treaty also provided

> *'That the collection and control of all revenues, and the general administration of the country, be regulated under the advice of these Residents'.*

Another Article empowered the Government of the Straits Settlements to fix the cost of the Residents and their staffs, which would, however, be a first charge on the revenues of Perak. Provision was also made for the payment of allowances to the Sultan, the ex-Sultan, and other chiefs, from these revenues. The Pangkor Engagement, or Treaty, was signed on Tuesday, 20th January 1874, and gave the British Government virtually complete control over the administration and revenues of Perak.

Before returning to Singapore, and with the troubles in Larut still burdening his mind, Sir Andrew offered Speedy the post of Assistant Resident to the Mentri. Knowing that the future tin revenues of Larut would be strictly controlled by the British government — and that even the Mentri would receive a mere stipend — Speedy accepted this offer. Sir Andrew then told him to disband his Indian sepoys and to re-enlist them as the Resident's Guard — the nucleus for a Larut police force.

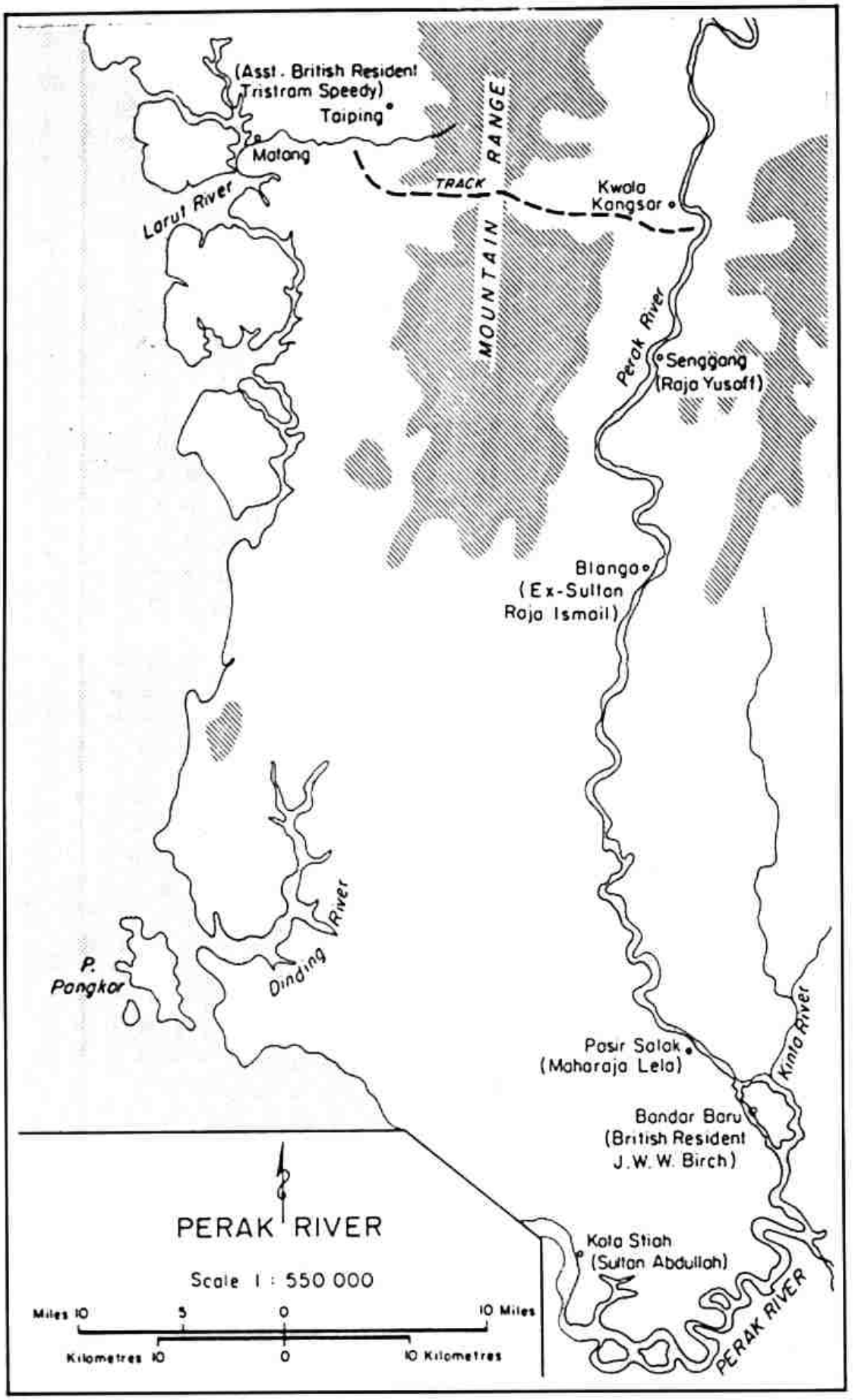
Satisfied that the British would be in charge of law and order, the Chinese factions agreed to accept a commission, appointed by the Governor, to demarcate their respective lands and water supplies in the mining areas. Both Swettenham and Pickering were members of this commission, and the miners readily agreed to its decisions. When they returned to the mines, the Chinese called the main village 'Taiping', meaning 'Great Peace'.

On his return to Singapore, the Governor received the congratulations of the entire business community, and subsequently even the guarded support of the British Government in London. Senior civil servants vied for appointment as Resident of Perak, a position which had yet to be filled. Even Birch, the Colonial Secretary, applied for the post. Birch wrote, *inter alia*:

> *'I believe I can really be of use. My whole life has been spent in opening up new country and improving and enriching a country, and in teaching the native chiefs good government.'*

Before Sir Andrew had time to consider this appointment, however, he was distracted by a further act of piracy off the coast of Selangor. During his absence in Perak, pirates had attacked the lighthouse near the border of Malacca at Cape Rachado, and Malays from Selangor were reported to have been involved. Fortunately, the British lighthouse-keeper had managed to chase the pirates away by using his carbine. Determined to stop this menace to shipping in the Malacca Straits, Sir Andrew was escorted to Selangor by a strong force of naval vessels, including the battleship, *Iron Duke.*

The new Governor had his first meeting with Sultan Abdul Samad in Langat on 9th February, 1874. Sir Andrew insisted that the pirates must be captured and tried by a Malay court, which would emphasize the Sultan's own desire for justice. The Sultan readily agreed, and eight suspects were arrested and


(Asst. British Resident
Tristram Speedy)
Taiping
Matang
Larut River
TRACK
MOUNTAIN RANGE
Kwala
Kangsar
Perak River
Senggang
(Raja Yusoff)
Blanga
(Ex-Sultan
Raja Ismail)
P.
Pangkor
Dinding River
Kinta River
Pasir Salak
(Maharaja Lela)
Bandar Baru
(British Resident
J.W.W. Birch)
PERAK RIVER
Scale 1 : 550 000
Miles 10 5 0 10 Miles
Kilometres 10 0 10 Kilometres
Kota Stiah
(Sultan Abdullah)
PERAK RIVER

charged with various acts of piracy, including murder. The court's President was the Viceroy, with his legal adviser, J.G. Davidson, assisting the prosecution. The accused men, on the other hand, had no legal help — and no right of appeal.

Having arranged this trial, the Governor returned to Singapore, where he later learned that seven of the suspects had been convicted and sentenced to death. They were executed in the traditional Malay manner, by means of a 'kris' or dagger with a serpentine blade. The eighth prisoner was reprieved on account of his youth. However, the grim ending to this trial undoubtedly reinforced the authority of both the Sultan and his Viceroy.

In the early autumn of 1874, disturbances occurred in the areas marked 'Sungei Ujong' on John Russell's maps. Sungei Ujong itself was the largest and most important of a miscellany of petty chieftaincies almost surrounding the British settlement of Malacca. Its importance was due to tin mines in which Malacca traders were involved. For several years there had been constant bickering between local chiefs over their rights to impose taxes on consignments of tin passing through their territories. In 1874, these arguments had taken a more dangerous turn, and armed bands were threatening the area. Tin production ceased.

Because Sungei Ujong bordered directly onto the southern rim of Selangor, there were well-founded fears that fighting would spread into that State. Anticipating trouble, the Governor sent Frank Swettenham, with twenty Malay policemen from Malacca, to Langat, where he was to act as an unofficial adviser to the Sultan. Sir Andrew recognized that as Langat lay only a few miles from the Sungei Ujong boundary it would be a tempting target for marauding raiders.

The situation in Sungei Ujong continued to deteriorate, and by November the Governor decided that only a properly trained militia could quell the fighting. He ordered a mixed force of British soldiers and armed police to be sent from Singapore escorted by the Royal Navy. Sir Andrew himself accompanied this expedition. The appearance of these uniformed troops with their formidable weaponry was enough: the local combatants fled into the jungle, abandoning their ancient cannon and primitive stockades. Their leaders hastily surrendered and were removed to Singapore.

Sir Andrew amalgamated all the minor chieftaincies into a single unit, and installed a local chief known as the Dato Klana, who was in favour of British control, as the Ruler of the new State of Sungei Ujong. He also appointed a British army officer to be the first Assistant Resident, although no Resident was named.

Before the end of 1874, encouraged by Frank Swettenham, Sultan Abdul Samad of Selangor agreed to accept the Residency system on the same terms as Perak. In December, the Governor made two important appointments which duly appeared in the *Gazette*: J.G. Davidson was to be the British Resident, Selangor, and J.W.W. Birch the British Resident of Perak.

Map showing locations of leading personalities in Perak, shortly before Birch's murder on 2nd November 1875.

It soon became clear that the posting of Birch to Perak had been a tragic mistake.

3 Cataclysm

Whilst in Singapore, Birch had become President of the exclusive Tanglin Club, which included senior civil servants and business nabobs among its members. It had probably struck John Russell as odd that Birch should have been President of a prestigious social club. In England at that time, the committees of leading London clubs were often headed by members of the aristocracy, and rarely would even senior government employees have a hand in affairs of high society. In the Straits Settlements, there was no 'aristocracy' in a European sense, and the term 'civil servant' was not in general use. These men were 'Her Britannic Majesty's Government Officers', and were not only leaders of government, but were also dominant in every social activity. The citizens of the Straits Settlements called these government officers 'The Heaven-born'. Unfortunately, the system engendered an attitude of undeserved superiority among the senior officers, and J.W.W. Birch was no exception.

Birch, now forty-eight, having already savoured independent command as British Agent for the Eastern Provinces of Ceylon, had probably felt frustrated by his subservient position as Colonial Secretary. He was delighted to be appointed the first British Resident of Perak — an area many times larger and potentially richer than all the Straits Settlements put together — even though it meant leaving the punkah'd halls of the Tanglin Club. Unfortunately, his relations with Sultan Abdullah began to sour within a few weeks of his appointment.

The records John Russell perused contained several references to the characters of these two men, and it was hardly surprising that the Sultan and Birch were unable to work together. They were as diverse as could be imagined: they differed in race, birth, up-bringing, religion, life-styles, pleasures, but most importantly, convictions. The Sultan and the new Resident were both convinced that they were destined to rule Perak: the Sultan by right of birth, and Birch through a self-righteous sense of duty. To make matters worse, they could not agree on the proper interpretation of the Treaty of Pangkor. But they shared one characteristic: both men were as stubborn as mules.

On first acquaintance, Birch had evidently found Sultan Abdullah to be a quiet, polite, intelligent young man. It was not long, however, before he began to take a very different view of him. Abdullah seldom rose from his bed before lunchtime, he smoked opium, he left important papers unsigned, and he was always surrounded by a bevy of attractive young women. When Birch discovered that these girls were the daughters of debtors, his moral beliefs were outraged. Contemporary British morality did not sanction slaves of any kind, and the very idea of innocent maidens being seized for recovery of debt offended Birch to the core of his soul.

The new Resident announced that he would destroy debt-slavery in Perak. By openly declaring his opposition to this custom, Birch was directly attacking a

traditional element in the life of this economically deprived community. Most of the limited resources were in the hands of the local chiefs, upon whom the workers were almost entirely dependent. If weddings, funerals, sickness, or other family events required material or financial support, the villagers relied upon their chiefs for loans, either in cash or kind. If such debts could not be repaid within a reasonable time, work had to be performed in lieu of payment. This practice was well-established in several Eastern countries, and although containing lamentably evil aspects, was generally tolerated by the people. Birch's views caused an outcry from the Sultan, the ex-Sultan, and all the chiefs of Perak.

It soon became known that the Resident was offering sanctuary to any escaping young women who made their way to his house. When it was further discovered that Birch was later shipping these females to Penang, disguised as sailors, everyone became convinced that he was selling them for his own profit — after use.

Because the practice of working off debts had lasted for hundreds of years and was a recognized custom of the country, the Sultan argued, perhaps correctly, that under the Treaty of Pangkor the Resident had no right to interfere with it. Small wonder then that within a short time Abdullah and Birch were no longer on friendly terms.

The Resident could not have been unaware of the depth of feeling against him; he simply chose to ignore it, and continued to berate the Sultan at all their confrontations. News of Birch's reforming zeal was soon known in Penang, and eventually in Singapore. Sir Andrew Clarke wrote to him saying that he should stop trying to make the nobility of Perak 'give up anything', an obvious reference to the damsels. Sir Andrew also told Birch to forget about the transfer of the regalia for the time being.

Evidently disregarding Sir Andrew's wishes, in January 1875, Birch arranged for a meeting between Abdullah and Ismail, at which he was determined to achieve the transfer of the regalia. He had invited all the chiefs of Perak to witness this important event, and he proudly informed the Governor of his intentions. Unknown to Birch, Abdullah and Ismail had secretly agreed that the regalia would not change hands, and when the great day came, much to the embarrassment of all present, they refused even to discuss the subject. This was not so much because of any unwillingness to be reconciled, but simply to demonstrate their mutual dislike of Birch.

It might have been expected that Birch would regard this failure as a humiliating defeat. Not at all. The Resident became even more determined to teach 'the native chiefs' the art of good government, and appeared quite oblivious to all the signs that he was heading for disaster. Meanwhile, the chiefs' previous dislike of him slowly turned into a malignant hatred.

In Singapore, Sir Andrew Clarke was beginning to see that Birch's previous reports from Perak had been too optimistic, and he had doubts as to whether he had picked the right man for the job.

It was at this juncture, whilst the Governor was considering what suitable action he could take in Perak, that he was offered a most favourable

promotion by the British Government. Sir Andrew accepted the appointment as Minister of Public Works in the Viceroy of India's Council, at a greatly enhanced salary. The Governor's new appointment was announced on 13th February 1875, but on the same day he was required to sail to Bangkok to adjudicate in a dispute within the Royal family of Siam on behalf of the British Government. Although his mission was entirely successful, and the enlightened King Chulalonkorn was restored to supreme power, the Governor could not return to Singapore until 4th March, when much other work awaited him. It was not until the following month that he was able to concentrate again on the problems of Perak, knowing that his successor was due to arrive in May.

Sir Andrew decided to go to Penang and meet Abdullah and Birch on the island. He wrote to Birch asking him to make the necessary arrangements. The Governor arrived in Penang on 15th April, on board the *Pluto*, and was welcomed by Anson, the Lieutenant Governor. Although Birch also awaited him, there was no sign of Sultan Abdullah nor of any of the Perak chiefs — merely a plethora of excuses to account for their absence. Birch then reported on the manifold difficulties he faced in dealing with Abdullah: the Sultan's refusal to accept his advice on any subject, the fact that the Sultan continued to collect his own taxes, the Sultan's general idleness, and, finally, the news that they were now hardly on speaking terms. Having listened to this diatribe against Abdullah — his own appointee — the Governor realized that the situation in Perak was even worse than he had thought. He was, however, at a loss to suggest any immediate solution to this problem of personalities. Even when he returned to Singapore, the Governor had no recommendations about Perak to leave to his successor, Sir William Francis Drummond Jervois.

There was a marked, though superficial, resemblance between Jervois and his predecessor. Both had been professional soldiers in the Royal Engineers with the rank of colonel. Both were also remarkably similar in appearance — so much so that from photographs, it was difficult to distinguish between them. Despite their similarities, it soon became evident that the two men were totally different in character. Though both were highly competent, Clarke was primarily interested in diplomacy and was something of a dreamer, whereas Jervois was very much the enlightened professional soldier — a man of more practical ability.

Sir William spent the first few months of his governorship getting a firm grip on the administration of the Straits Settlements, and in studying the policies of his predecessor. Eventually, however, he was confronted by an accumulation of dispatches from Birch in Perak — all stressing Sultan Abdullah's unwillingness to accept any kind of 'advice' from the Resident. Realizing that events were taking a serious turn, the Governor decided to assess the situation for himself. He left for Perak on board the *Pluto* on 31st August 1875, escorted by a warship of the Royal Navy and a bodyguard of thirty Indian soldiers. He decided to begin his tour with a visit to Larut, and by the time he reached Taiping, he had been joined by Davidson and Swettenham from Selangor, by Birch and Speedy, and other British officials.

The detailed reports made it clear that Sir William Jervois was prepared to take strong action to settle the disturbed politics of Perak. But what action would this tough soldier take?

A hint of what the Governor was contemplating could be gleaned from his report to the Colonial Office, written after he had spent three days inspecting Larut. Amongst other things, he wrote:

> *'The Tin districts are peopled almost exclusively by Chinese, who regard the British Government as virtually the ruling power, and the British Officer residing there has been able to act their improvement without interference or opposition from the chiefs of Perak.'*

The Governor could see no reason why a similar acceptance of British domination could not be achieved among the Malays.

From Taiping, Sir William was borne by elephant along the daunting jungle path which formed the only route between northern Larut and the rest of Perak. When he arrived at Kuala Kangsar, he was met by several Malay chieftains, including a man who bore the title of Sri Maharaja Lela, described by the Governor as 'an imbecile old man'. John Russell could find no reasonable explanation for this derogatory comment. Perhaps Jervois had been told that the Maharaja Lela was violently anti-British, or perhaps the Governor was merely short-tempered after a long and uncomfortable elephant ride.

From Kuala Kangsar, Jervois sailed down the Perak River until he came to the village of Senggang where he met a distinguished chief, Raja Yusoff, who claimed that he had a better title to the Sultanate of Perak than either Abdullah or Ismail.

At the end of a long talk with Raja Yusoff, Sir William reported that he found him superior, both in bearing and intelligence, to the other Perak chiefs he had encountered. He added:

> *'. . . I found that representations previously made to me that he wished the British Government to undertake the Government of the country were quite correct. He told me distinctly that he thought this was the only way to put an end to the present unsettled state of affairs in Perak.'*

Sir William then sailed downstream to Blanja where he met ex-Sultan Ismail. Although acknowledging that Ismail had the support of the majority of upper river chieftains, the Governor decided that Ismail was merely a puppet of the Mentri, and unworthy of any consideration as Sultan. Bluntly, he told Ismail that in his view Perak should be governed by British officers. Ismail replied that he would agree to this so long as he, not Abdullah, were Sultan; but he admitted that Perak was in a 'very unsettled and disturbed' condition. Having decided that Ismail would be useless as a ruler, Sir William again boarded the river boat, and was carried down to meet Sultan Abdullah, who received him with a veritable army of chiefs and followers from the lower reaches of the river.

It was clear that the Governor had sailed into a potentially explosive situation. Only a month before — in August — Abdullah had already planned drastic action. Because the British Government had failed to remove Birch as Resident, Abdullah and Ismail had temporarily put aside their rivalry and

agreed to take matters into their own hands. If Sir William Jervois still refused to dismiss the hated Resident, both he and Birch would be assassinated: only Abdullah's signal was required to wipe out the entire bodyguard, the Governor, and the Resident. It had been suspected for some time that Abdullah had been obtaining arms from Penang, and although Birch had heard rumours of an impending attack upon himself, he had contemptuously brushed them aside. Similarly, if the Governor had any inkling of present danger, he chose to ignore it.

Governor Jervois landed on the island of Bandar Bahru where Birch had his Residency, and it was there that he gave Sultan Abdullah a straight-from-the-shoulder gubernatorial dressing down, interpreted by Frank Swettenham. He told Abdullah that he, as well as other chiefs of Perak, had violated the Pangkor Treaty. Instead of following the Resident's advice he had thwarted him in his attempts to improve the condition of the state; there was no real government; the system of debt-slavery was oppressive, and at variance with Muslim law; the present state of affairs in Perak was calculated to lead to disturbances, and the British Government could not allow it to continue. In view of this, the Governor proposed that British officers should undertake the government of the State, in the Sultan's name.

Finally, Jervois brusquely added that Abdullah, Ismail, and other chiefs entitled to payment, would receive allowances 'from the revenues of Perak'. A similar assurance had been included in the Treaty of Pangkor, which had been signed almost two years previously. No money had ever been paid, and the nobles had continued to exact their own taxes — to Birch's fury. In fact, apart from the remote district of Larut where Speedy had successfully established a tax barrier at the mouth of the Larut river, there had been no 'revenues of Perak'.

No doubt reeling from the virulence of the Governor's diatribe, Abdullah shrewdly asked for more time before commenting on the proposal that British officers should take over control of his state. He said that he would have to consult the 'Chiefs at Blanja', meaning Ismail and his supporters.

The Governor, however, was in no mood for further delay: he had already made up his mind about the future administration of Perak. He decreed that the British Resident would henceforth be titled the 'Queen's Commissioner', and Assistant Residents as 'Assistant Queen's Commissioners'. They would rule the state 'in the name of the Sultan' — a thinly disguised cover for their supreme power. The Governor also decided that Birch would have to be removed from Perak, but he thought that it might be taken as a sign of weakness if this were to happen too quickly. In due course, he intended to replace Birch with Davidson, from Selangor, but in the meantime he decided that Swettenham should remain in Perak as an Assistant to Birch.

The Governor left Perak on 15th September 1875, having arranged for suitable Proclamations to be made announcing the new form of government. He appeared to have no appreciation of the fact that his actions had created an even more dangerous situation. During his two week visit, he had failed to listen to the grievances of the Perak chiefs. Moreover, he had not only given apparent approval to Birch's activities, but he had even enhanced the

Resident's powers. He had also failed to pay their promised allowances, he had condemned debt-slavery, and he had insulted their religion. It was remarkable that Abdullah had not given the signal for his immediate assassination. Jervois certainly did not realize that he was fortunate to be alive.

On returning to Singapore, the Governor made a somewhat belated report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. He wrote:

> '*It might possibly be suggested that the Malays might make some forcible resistance to the Government of Perak being undertaken by British Officers. I beg to assure your Lordship that I have made most particular enquiry on this point, and I am convinced that there is not the least probability of such an event.*'

Later in his report he added:

> *'I considered well whether it might be desirable as a matter of precaution to place a small body of our troops in Perak, but feeling confident that there is no necessity for such a step, I determined not to do so . . .'*

This report was not written until 16th October — one month after his return from Perak — and it reflected at least *some* need for reassurance that there would be no violent outbreak in the state. Why, for instance, did the Governor say, 'It might possibly be suggested that the Malays might make some forcible resistance . . .'? Who might make such a suggestion to the Secretary of State? Or was this indicative of a lingering fear in the mind of the Governor himself? Naturally, Jervois knew that this report could not reach London for at least five weeks, by which time his new system of government would be already in operation. He believed that the Colonial Office would approve his *fait accompli.*

After the Governor's departure, it took Birch two whole weeks, until the beginning of October, to persuade Sultan Abdullah to sign the draft proclamation for the new form of government. Even then, Abdullah signed it only reluctantly, probably feeling under duress — as, in fact, he was. The month of October 1875 happened to be the Muslim fasting month — a month for prayer and meditation, not for quarrelling. During this month, Swettenham was sent to Singapore to have the new proclamations printed, there being no printing-press in Perak. He returned to Bandar Bahru on 26th October, with copies of the proclamation in Malay. Birch decided that these posters should be displayed in the main riverine villages as soon as possible, and he ordered Swettenham to go up-stream to distribute them. Birch himself would promulgate copies in the down-stream villages. It was arranged that they would meet again on 3rd November, at the village of Pasir Salak, only five miles up-stream from the Residency.

Pasir Salak was the domain of the Maharaja Lela, of whom the Governor had written so disparagingly. It had been known for some time that the Maharaja had been building a stockade around his village. It was also known that he was one of Sultan Abdullah's most avid supporters.

Carefully turning the immaculately handwritten pages in the archives, John Russell was soon to learn that the Maharaja Lela had been chosen by his

fellow chieftains — and by the Sultan himself — to be the instrument of Birch's demise. He had sworn to murder the Resident once the fasting month was ended.

Birch had been warned by several sympathetic Malays that certain chiefs were plotting to kill him. To one of these warnings he had replied:

'Don't bother yourself about me... I am an old man. If I am killed the country will become the Queen's.'

To another warning he had lately given a similar reply:

'I am an old man. If I die, what does it matter?'

These were strange words from a man who was only forty-nine, and who had a wife and children in England. John Russell must have pondered over these fatalistic responses. Did they merely reflect a spirit of bravado in a fearless man? Or did they indicate a knowledge that the Governor intended to replace him as Resident, and that he saw his own death as the only honourable way to avoid public disgrace? Was there, in fact, a suicidal acceptance of his fate in the Queen's service, or simply a continued unshakeable belief in his own righteousness? He had deliberately concealed from Sir William Jervois the warnings which he had received, and he had proudly refused the Governor's offer of reinforcements.

On 28th October 1875, two days before the end of the fasting month, Birch wrote to the Maharaja Lela telling him to stop building any more stockades round his village. The Maharaja reportedly told the Resident's messenger:

'You can go back and tell Mr Birch to get all the troops he can from England and India and I will fight.'

The fast ended on 1st November, and on the evening of that day Birch was poled up-stream to the village of Pasir Salak — the fortified lair of the Maharaja Lela. Because this chieftain had made no secret of his antagonistic attitude, it might have been expected that the Resident would approach the village with a strongly armed escort; this, however, was not the case. Birch was accompanied by only ten armed but poorly trained sepoys who travelled in one boat, and by his cooks and servants in another. This was no more than his usual escort when visiting villages on the river. The Resident himself was on board a white half-covered vessel flying a British flag. He was accompanied by a young naval officer, Sub-Lieutenant Abbott, who was off-duty and who merely wanted to do some game shooting on the banks of the river. Birch's 'houseboat' towed a strange-looking appendage — the Resident's floating bath-house.

On that evening, Birch did not land at Pasir Salak. He anchored his three boats in mid-stream where they spent the night, within sight and sound of the Maharaja and his followers. Although it seemed that Birch was almost deliberately inviting a night attack by his enemies, he told his sepoys not to use their firearms, 'even if the people of Pasir Salak try to make a disturbance'.

Early in the morning of 2nd November, Birch brought his three boats to the river bank where they were moored at the edge of the village. Sub-Lieutenant Abbott was ferried across the river in a small canoe for his game shooting on the opposite bank. The sepoys landed and began to clean their unloaded rifles. The cooks also disembarked to prepare the morning meal. Birch sent his interpreter Mat Arshad into the village to tell the Maharaja Lela that he wished to see him.

Mat Arshad walked through the village to the Maharaja's wooden house and relayed the Resident's request. The Maharaja did not conceal his hostility. 'Why should we go down to see him ?' he asked Mat Arshad. 'This is not his country or village. It is ours.'

Knowing the purpose of the Resident's visit, the Maharaja told the interpreter to warn Birch that he would not allow any proclamations to be posted in Pasir Salak. As he walked back to the river bank, Mat Arshad was followed by some of the Maharaja's armed guards, and by the time he reached the Resident's boat, a large unfriendly crowd had gathered round him.

It happened that Birch's houseboat was moored only ten yards from the hut of a Chinese goldsmith, and, despite the Maharaja's warning, Birch ordered Mat Arshad to fix copies of the proclamation to the walls of that hut. The Resident was apparently unperturbed by the abuse being directed at him from the hostile crowd on the bank.

Birch then stepped into his floating bath-house which now lay at the river bank. This consisted of a small raft with walls of palm leaves designed to conceal most of the occupant. River water could be scooped up through a gap at the back of the platform. Birch began his morning ablutions.

Meanwhile, the unfortunate Mat Arshad was attempting to post the proclamations on the walls of the goldsmith's hut; they were, however, immediately torn down by the Maharaja's supporters. Through the palm leaves of the bath-house, Birch was told what was happening. He ordered Mat Arshad to put the proclamations up again. Before making his next attempt, the interpreter tried to persuade the villagers to let him get on with his job, saying that they could do what they liked with the posters after the Resident had departed. One of the Maharaja's henchmen named Pandak Indut, armed with a Malay dagger and a spear, was determined to prevent the interpreter from posting any proclamations. When Mat Arshad again approached the wall, he found his way blocked by Pandak Indut, whom he attempted to push aside. Indut instantly stabbed the interpreter with his kris, inflicting a fatal wound. Mat Arshad died almost immediately.

The frenzied mob then rushed to the bath-house, where Pandak Indut speared Birch through the palm-leaf walls. He was closely followed by another assassin called Seputum who broke into the bath-house and hacked Birch to death with a sword. The body fell into the river through the gap in the floor and was borne down-stream by the current.

The single sentry who had been posted on the Resident's boat was armed only with a revolver; however, at the first sign of serious trouble, this man

leapt into the river and swam to safety. He was more fortunate than some of his colleagues, who were gathered on the bank not far from the Resident's boat and who were soon attacked by the mob. One sepoy and one boatman were killed, and six other men wounded, three seriously. The sepoys' boat was abandoned, but the survivors managed to escape down-stream in smaller boats, including that of the cooks and servants. Apparently no shots were fired by the sepoys — even in their own defence.

On the opposite bank, Sub-Lieutenant Abbott was warned not to cross the river, and he eventually escaped down-stream in a canoe paddled by a friendly boatman, despite being fired upon from both banks.

After the commotion had quietened to some extent, the Maharaja descended from his house and progressed to the scene of the murders. He divided some of the Resident's possessions among the assassins, but some he kept for himself: these included the two boats, a 3-pounder gun, British flags, three boxes of documents, some private belongings, and about $100 in cash. Later that morning, he dispatched the Resident's houseboat up-stream to Blanja with a message to ex-Sultan Ismail telling him that the assassination of Birch had been successfully accomplished, and he invited Ismail to keep the houseboat for himself — an offer which was declined.

The end of the fasting month was always celebrated by several days of feasting, but on the night of Birch's murder, the villagers of Pasir Salak thought that they had an additional reason for rejoicing — they were obviously invincible. One man, however, appeared to have second thoughts about the day's events; this was Seputum, one of the principal assassins. When he eventually returned to his hut, he said to his wife, 'I shall die for this.'

Surrounded by his sycophants, the Maharaja was well satisfied with the elimination of the British Resident, but to crown his success, he was determined that Swettenham would be similarly destroyed when he came down the river.

Aftermath

4

When Sub-Lieutenant Abbott returned safely to the Residency, he at once attended to the wounded, and questioned the other survivors to get a clear picture of what had happened at Pasir Salak. Fortunately, the *Pluto* was lying further down the river, and Abbott gave her Captain an urgent message for Anson, the Lieutenant Governor of Penang, telling him the news. After receiving Abbott's report, Anson ordered a young army Captain named Innes to take a detachment of soldiers and a party of police to Bandar Bahru as reinforcements. He also appointed Innes to act as Assistant Resident, because it was thought likely that Swettenham had shared Birch's fate on his way down the river. Anson then sent a cable to Sir William Jervois telling him of Birch's murder, and of the action he had taken.

At first, the Governor found Anson's news difficult to believe. James Birch murdered? It seemed incredible. Might this not be merely an unconfirmed rumour? If it was indeed a murder, was it perhaps of a domestic origin — the result of some personal grudge against the Resident? A disgruntled servant perhaps? Sir William sent more telegrams to Anson asking for further details. In his replies, Anson could only say that he had told Captain Innes at Bandar Bahru 'to enquire into the circumstances of the murder'.

It was not until 4th November, two days after the event, that the Governor was eventually convinced that Birch had indeed been murdered. He then sent a telegram to the Secretary of State, Lord Carnarvon, giving him the tragic news, and saying, *inter alia*, 'I think this affair is one of an isolated character'. Lord Carnarvon replied that he hoped that the murder was 'an isolated outrage', and that it would not lead to any military operations which might 'endanger British policy in Native States.' The Governor, however, had not told the Secretary of State that he had also received distressing reports of fresh disturbances in both Sungei Ujong and Selangor, which he intended to investigate personally.

Meanwhile, Frank Swettenham, having posted the proclamations at up-river villages, and knowing nothing of the grim events at Pasir Salak, was being paddled down-stream to meet the Resident. However, when he arrived at Blanja, the seat of ex-Sultan Ismail, he found an unusually large number of boats, and more than two hundred armed men. As his boat entered the shallows, Swettenham was approached by one of Ismail's henchmen who had waded through the water to meet him. Swettenham had previously met this man, whose name was Haji Ali, and, although he did not altogether trust him, he listened to what he had to say:

> *'Mr Birch has been murdered at Pasir Salak. His house and island have been taken by the Maharaja Lela, and his guard of Indians killed or dispersed. The river at Pasir Salak has been staked from bank to bank so that no boat can pass. They are waiting for you, and the only thing you can do is to come ashore and stay here.'*

Swettenham did not believe this appalling news:

'How am I to know that what you are say is true?

Haji Ali replied:

'Because the Maharaja Lela has written to Raja Ismail to tell him, and sent his letter by Mr Birch's boat to prove his statement. Raja Ismail refused to have the boat here, and told the messengers to take it back to Pasir Salak. They left two hours ago.'

Swettenham and his companions realized that they were now in a most perilous situation. If they risked a landing at Blanja, they might be subjected to the same treatment as Birch had reportedly suffered. On the other hand, they could easily be trapped if they continued to go down the river. Although Swettenham himself and eight of his helpers decided to continue down-stream, several of his men were in favour of staying at Blanja, at least until matters were resolved. Swettenham made no attempt to dissuade these followers, and he let them retain one of his two boats. He also gave them his journal for safe keeping, making a last scribbled entry describing the news he had received at Blanja, 'in case I should not get through.' He added defiantly, '. . . we will go for them yet; anyway I can't turn back.'

Swettenham's crew consisted of three Malays, a coxswain from the Philippines, and a Chinese servant. He was also accompanied by a loyal friend, Raja Mahmud, from Selangor, and two of his henchmen: nine men, sharing one shotgun and two rifles. They sailed from Blanja shortly after 4.30 p.m. on 4th November, already a day late for the prearranged meeting with Birch at Pasir Salak. As their boat was being paddled into mid-stream to catch the flow of the current, Haji Ali again waded towards them. Their boat was now gliding slowly out of his reach, and seeing their intention, he yelled to them in frustration:

'It is impossible!' he shouted. 'The whole country down-stream is in arms and watching for you. It is certain death! No doubt you think yourselves very fine fellows, but you will be killed all the same!'

The apprehension of the men in this lonely boat may be imagined as it sailed between banks of jungle and vegetation which offered perfect cover for snipers. Their greatest danger lay in the vicinity of the scattered villages which they must pass on their way down-stream, whose inhabitants would already have received the news from Pasir Salak.

Swettenham's worst forebodings were confirmed when, after sailing for about an hour, they saw Birch's untended houseboat moored by an island in the river and they knew that Ali's news about his murder must be true. They did not stop. After two more hours, the tropical daylight quickly faded into night, and they were careful to keep in the swiftest part of the current. Having passed the lamps of several villages without interference, at 1.30 a.m. on 5th November, they were carried swiftly towards the hostile settlement of Pasir Salak. Watch fires were burning on the river bank, each surrounded by armed men. Protected by the smoke from these fires, and by a natural mist,

Swettenham's boat was able to sail undetected past the main part of the village, its progress unhampered by any barrier. No stakes, no ropes, nor any other man-made obstructions impeded its silent passage.

However, just as Swettenham and his men were beginning to breathe more easily, their boat ran aground in the soft silt of the river in front of the last watch fire. They were immediately challenged by one of the sentries. 'Whose boat is that?' shouted a voice. One of Swettenham's men replied that their boat was that of a well-known local religious leader. Other questions followed: 'Where are you from?' 'From Blanja,' replied Swettenham's colleague. 'Where are you going?' Fortunately, before any further reply was necessary, the boat was freed from the silt and vanished rapidly down-stream.

The chance of running aground was only one of many risks involved in navigating the winding Perak River by night — especially without lights. Branches of trees, logs and mooring stakes all presented hazards. Tropical nights could change quickly from bright moonlight to impenetrable darkness, and a narrow river craft could easily be overturned by an unseen obstruction.

Swettenham and his men knew that if even a part of Ali's information could be trusted, they should expect fierce resistance when they reached the Residency at Bandar Bahru, five miles down-stream from Pasir Salak and reportedly occupied by the Maharaja's fighters. It was therefore with renewed fear that they approached the erstwhile headquarters. They saw no watch fires, nor any obstructions in the river, but as they passed Birch's house they saw a man — possibly a sentry — walking up and down on the verandah under a lamp. Suspecting a trap, they did not stop, but floated past — apparently unobserved. Ten miles further down-stream, they were challenged by English voices from a steam launch and they knew that they were again amongst friends. Undoubtedly, they owed their survival to their foreign coxswain whose skilful navigation had guided them safely through the treacherous waters of the river.

In this way, before dawn on 5th November, Swettenham got his first authentic news of events during the three days since Birch's murder. He learned that Sub-Lieutenant Abbott had made good his escape from Pasir Salak and had returned safely to Bandar Bahru. Ali's story about an attack on the Residency proved to be quite unfounded: there had been no such attack, and Abbott was now in charge there. He had already sent the *Pluto* to Penang to fetch reinforcements.

Swettenham returned to the Residency later that day, and took over command from Abbott. He promptly dispatched some Bugis, who successfully recovered Birch's body from up-stream and brought it to the Residency. On the following day, 6th November, Captain Innes arrived at the Residency with the soldiers and police from Penang. Although Anson had appointed him to be an Assistant Resident, or Commissioner, Innes at once recognized Swettenham's seniority, and readily agreed to revert to purely military duties. On the evening of his arrival at Bandar Bahru, Innes was present at the simple burial service for Birch which was conducted by Swettenham. Later, the three British officers — Swettenham, Innes and Abbott — held a council of war at the Residency. Swettenham persuaded his

colleagues that fast action was necessary to prevent the Maharaja and his followers from strengthening their position at Pasir Salak, and it was decided to launch a counter-attack on the following day.

Accordingly, on the morning of 7th November, five days after Birch's death, Swettenham and his colleagues were poled up-stream for their attack on Pasir Salak. They headed a small flotilla carrying soldiers and police, with Sumatran scouts who were to guide them on shore. It had been agreed that they would not sail straight to the Maharaja's village, but that they would land on the river bank three miles down-stream, and then march for the rest of the way. By so doing they hoped to take the enemy by surprise. Captain Innes, the professional soldier, had apparently accepted this plan on being assured by Swettenham that the stockades were close to the village, which would allow ample time for his troops to be tactically deployed before making an assault. Unfortunately, Innes had been given no time to make a reconnaissance of the area.

According to plan, the troops and police were safely disembarked and began their three-mile march. As the column advanced, the leader of the scouts, a Sumatran named Nacodah, came to a piece of cleared land cultivated with Indian corn, which, being lower than human height, offered little cover. Nevertheless, knowing that they were at least two miles from Pasir Salak, he pressed forward towards a dark mass of trees which lay directly ahead. A sudden fusillade of gun-fire erupted from beneath the trees, and Nacodah was killed in the first hail of bullets. In the hitherto quiet morning air, the sound of the firing was heard throughout the column, and Swettenham and Innes went forward cautiously to see what was happening. They saw that an earthwork had been constructed in front of the line of trees, and that this was surmounted by a stockade of logs from which the enemy was firing. This defensive barrier extended from the edge of the river to a patch of thick jungle about a hundred yards inland. It was decided to make an immediate attack on these defences.

Despite the inevitable confusion caused by this unexpected resistance so early in their progress, the trained soldiers from Penang responded without question to the orders of their British officers; not so the armed policemen who had been following the troops. They refused to obey orders, and declined to take part in the assault, saying that participation in warfare was not among their duties. Nevertheless, about sixty trained soldiers were available for the attack.

It was agreed that Innes would lead a direct assault on the stockade, near the river, while Swettenham would attempt a flanking movement inland. Innes, accompanied by two junior officers and a number of troops, then gave the order to charge the enemy. Sword in hand, he gallantly dashed from their previous cover, closely followed by his loyal troops, and charged towards the stockade. Now for the first time, it was seen that a deep ditch had been dug immediately in front of this obstacle. Under withering fire from the defenders, Captain Innes leapt into this ditch and attempted to climb up the bank of earth on the opposite side — becoming an immediate target. Bullets rained down on him from the stockade above, and he was killed instantly. His two junior officers were seriously wounded, and there were other casualties

among his soldiers. Swettenham's party also came under fire, with more men injured, although Swettenham himself was unhurt. Including Captain Innes, four men had been killed and thirteen wounded, some seriously. The remaining troops were now ordered to withdraw. There were no stretchers, no first-aid equipment, and no military officers left to organize the retreat. With uninjured men helping the wounded as best they could, the soldiers eventually re-embarked and returned to the Residency. The attempted attack, so eagerly promoted by Swettenham, had been a disastrous failure.

In the Straits Settlements, the news of Birch's murder had caused varying reactions in different sections of the population. In the coffee-shops and bars there was an undercurrent of fear that the murder might herald a general uprising in the hinterland - a place little understood by the average citizen. Might not Singapore, Malacca and Penang be overwhelmed by hostile hordes from the interior? Shrewd businessmen, on the other hand, regarded the outrage as an ideal excuse for the British Government to annexe the potentially rich states — simply incorporating them into the Empire. After all, the Dutch were taking similar action in Sumatra, and the French in Indo-China. What these arm-chair strategists failed to realize was that annexation was not the policy of the British Government — even under Mr Disraeli.

Sir William Jervois, however, was uncomfortably aware that he had already changed London's policy to some extent — at least in Perak. He knew that Carnarvon could not yet have received his letter of 16h October, in which he had discounted the possibility of the Malays making any resistance. It was inevitable that the new proclamations would be linked to Birch's murder. Meanwhile, there were many other matters to occupy the Governor's mind. Obviously, the most pressing necessity was for the Perak murderers to be caught and punished. Although he knew that Anson had already dispatched Captain Innes and a detachment of troops to Bandar Bahru, Jervois felt that he should visit the Perak River without delay. On his way, he would investigate the troubles in Sungei Ujong and Selangor.

Jervois left Singapore on board a chartered steamship on 5th November 1875, the day on which Swettenham had taken over from Abbott at Bandar Bahru. He was accompanied by Major Dunlop, who had previously been in charge of the Singapore police. Dunlop was now in command of twenty men of the Royal Artillery, armed with field guns. The steamer stopped first at Malacca, where Jervois got the latest news from Sungei Ujong. He learned that a number of minor chiefs had held a meeting at which they decided to depose the Ruler appointed by Sir Andrew Clarke, Dato Klana, and that fighting was expected. Jervois promised to send reinforcements. He then sailed to Klang to inquire about the latest skirmishes in Selangor. Satisfied that Davidson, the British Resident, could cope with the situation there, Jervois steamed north to the Perak River where he arrived on 8th November. Here, the Governor was shocked to learn of the calamitous failure of the previous day's attack on Pasir Salak: the killing of Captain Innes with three of his men, the wounding of others, and the retreat of the rest.

Jervois now became convinced that the murder of Birch had been no isolated incident; indeed it appeared to be the prelude to an armed uprising in Perak — a force of unknown strength, but one which had already defeated a sizeable

detachment of British troops. Clearly, his first duty was to suppress this outbreak before it spread into Selangor, Sungei Ujong, or other states. As a professional soldier, Jervois knew that he had insufficient troops in the Straits Settlements to meet such a challenge, which could involve the subjugation of the entire Malay population of Perak. The Governor immediately sent a message to the Acting Colonial Secretary in Singapore giving him the bad tidings and asking for three hundred troops from Hongkong, together with naval reinforcements.

Unfortunately, the Colonial Office in London had not yet appointed a successor to Birch as Colonial Secretary in Singapore, the post being held, temporarily, by the Auditor-General, C.J. Irving. From the time of Birch's murder, Irving had held the view that the murder was the beginning of a general anti-British movement throughout the entire peninsula. When he received the Governor's message asking for reinforcements from Hongkong he became so apprehensive that he created an atmosphere akin to panic in the government secretariat. He now dispatched a telegram to Lord Carnarvon which might have been written in a besieged fortress; never renowned for political sagacity, he implied that the Straits Settlements would be lost for ever unless immediate reinforcements were rushed from Hongkong or elsewhere.

Naturally alarmed by this unexpected, and evidently serious, turn of events, Carnarvon at once agreed to the use of troops and battleships from Hongkong. He also requested the India Office to send 250 soldiers from Calcutta, asking Irving 'whether the Governor considers this enough'. In the Governor's absence, Irving immediately consulted the Military Commandant in Singapore — an officer who knew very little about recent events in Malaya. No doubt influenced by Irving's aura of impending doom, the bemused Commandant felt bound to suggest that perhaps a thousand men from India would be better than 250. Irving cabled Carnarvon to that effect. In the event, no less than 1,500 soldiers with artillery, 50 miles of field telephone wire, and *1 million* cartridges were requested from India. Lord Carnarvon was aghast at the extent of these demands. Obviously, a million rounds of ammunition would have been more than enough to eliminate the entire population of Malaya, including the Straits Settlements. Besides, his only knowledge of recent happenings had been in the form of terse telegrams. Deeply perturbed, Carnarvon again cabled, asking for a full explanation and more details:

> *'I cannot judge for what purpose you want a military force apparently so much larger than what would be required to punish what you originally called an isolated outrage . . .'*

That telegram was dispatched on 12th November, but it elicited only a brief reply from Jervois, who had just returned from Perak. In this short report, however, the Governor revealed, for the first time, that Birch had been 'distributing a proclamation' at the time of his murder.

Because the Governor's report of 16th October had yet to be received in London, neither Carnarvon nor anyone else in the Colonial Office was aware of any new proclamations in Malaya. The Secretary of State now became angry — and suspicious. He knew that there were many senior businessmen in London and Singapore who, since Birch's murder, hoped for the military

annexation of the Malay States. On 14th November, Carnarvon sent an ominous telegram to Jervois about the use of troops from India :

> *'. . . you must clearly understand that these troops are allowed only for the punishment of outrage, and that in no case will Her Majesty's Government sanction their use for annexation or any other large political aims . . .'*

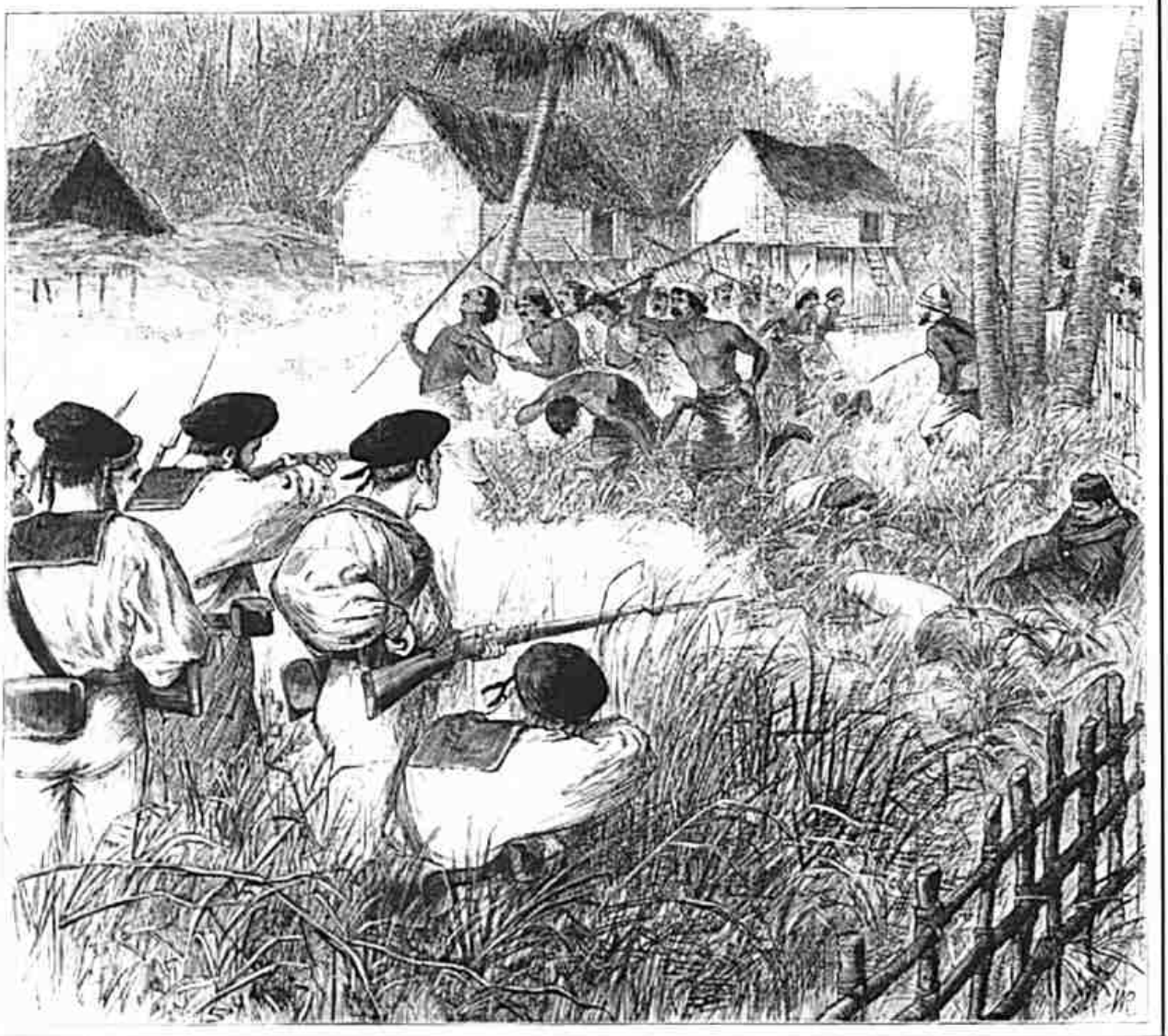
Obviously, the British Government was determined to maintain the authority of the Rulers, and Jervois was conscious that his new arrangements for Perak might be regarded as 'large political aims'.

It was at this delicate point that communications were suddenly broken off: the telegraph cable had snapped at the bottom of the ocean somewhere between Penang and Madras. Carnarvon received no reply to his telegram.

Jervois might well have been somewhat relieved to be out of touch with London at that time, although it was awkward for him to be cut off from India without knowing when reinforcements might arrive from Calcutta. In the meantime, the Governor had many other matters on his mind. Before leaving Perak, he had already appointed Major Dunlop to be the new Commissioner for Perak, with Swettenham as his Assistant Commissioner. He had also ordered Dunlop to disembark his soldiers and guns, and to keep them at Bandar Bahru to assist the garrison.

Being a professional soldier, Jervois had already devised a practical military solution to the problem of trouble-makers in the valley of the Perak River. The force from Hongkong would sail straight up the river, guided by Dunlop and Swettenham. The troops from India would advance on the line of the Larut River until they reached a point from which they could turn on to the elephant path which would lead them to Kuala Kangsar. Having per-formed this journey himself, the Governor knew that the Indian contingent would be forced to build a road up these mountains for the transportation of guns and marching men. As an experienced engineer officer, Jervois recognised that building a road in that jungle would not be easy. He therefore appointed one of his only engineer officers, a Major McNair, to be a Special Commissioner with the northern force. As his Assistant Commissioner, the Governor apppointed none other than William Edward Maxwell — somewhat to John Russell's surprise. Everything John had read about the present Resident of Selangor had seemed to indicate a studious, legal-minded, rather desk-bound administrator: yet here he had been chosen to work with hardened troops in some of the most difficult country in the peninsula. John Russell may have begun to regard his new superior officer with enhanced respect, although he realized that these events had happened fifteen years previously when William Maxwell was twenty-nine years old.

Having planned these dispositions, Jervois ordered an immediate naval blockade of the mouth of the Perak River, thereby cutting off all imports and exports to and from the villages. Even after his return to Singapore, there were more problems to be tackled. Supplies for the new forces in Perak had to be organized; reception committees established; coaling for warships arranged; small boats had to be built to convey troops on the Perak River; and, meanwhile, the duties of administering the Straits Settlements had to be



carried on as smoothly as possible. In the midst of these labours, on 16th November, was the arrival of the P & O liner *Kashgar* carrying three hundred soldiers from Hongkong, together with their commander, Major-General the Honourable Federick Colborne, who was most eager to distinguish himself in this new military campaign — the first in which he had been involved. In fact it had been more than a generation since the British Army's last engagement in serious warfare, and everybody — from generals down to the most junior officer — was keen to see some action.

Because General Colborne had no knowledge of the west coast of Malaya, and in the absence of maps, or any military reconnaissance reports, it was necessary for Jervois to spend many hours explaining the geography of the Perak River; position, length, width, depth, settlements, population, and temperatures. Jervois also explained that Major Dunlop was awaiting the General's arrival some way up-stream at Bandar Bahru. Finally, he handed General Colborne a letter in which he set out the object of the military intervention. Briefly, this amounted to the capture of Birch's murderers and the holding of the entire valley of the Perak River.

The Hongkong troops were re-embarked in two warships, and sailed from Singapore on 18th November. Scarcely had they departed when the Governor received devastating news from Perak. A message from Major Dunlop told him that, threatened by Dunlop's guns, the Maharaja Lela and his followers had left Pasir Salak and were now in the jungle on the opposite side of the river. Dunlop and his men had occupied the village before burning it to the ground. They had recovered Birch's two boats, a brass cannon and documents, together with five Malay guns. There were no reports of trouble elsewhere on the Perak River.

This decisive action placed Jervois in a most unenviable position. Help had been summoned from Hongkong and India, at vast public expense, to catch a small group of assassins who had already retreated. How could he justify the need for masses of British soldiers in the generally peaceful jungles of Perak? The worst suspicions of Lord Carnarvon seemed to be confirmed. Was Jervois attempting to annex the Malay Peninsula by force of arms — against the stated policy of Her Majesty's Government? A greater burden for Jervois was knowing that his letter of 16th October, in which he explained why he had changed the government of Perak, had not yet reached London. He feared that when it was received, he would be held responsible, at least indirectly, for Birch's murder.

Temporary residency at Banda Bahru, Perak River, where Mr. Birch lived.

The Barracks at the residency, Banda Bahru, with the graves of Mr. Birch and Capt. Innes.

Attack on the village of Kolah Lama on the Perak River.

The reinforcements from India arrived in Larut at the end of November 1875. At the same time, Major-General Colborne was preparing for his advance on the Perak River. Jervois moved to Penang to keep in closer touch with events in Perak.

Conveyed in fifty specially constructed river boats, General Colborne's soldiers began to move up-stream on 8th December. On that day, the northern column, under Brigadier-General J. Ross, was already approaching Kuala Kangsar. Ex-Sultan Ismail, at Blanja, realized that he was being threatened by advancing forces from both north and south, and, although protesting his innocence of any connection with Birch's murder, he decided to move into the Kinta district, away from the river. There, he was not far

from the Maharaja Lela and his followers, who were moving northwards into the mountains.

Meanwhile, the soldiers of the two 'attacking' columns found themselves battling with an underestimated adversary — the Malayan jungle. They found that it took many hours to move a field gun forward by only a few feet. The way was always blocked by massive trees and undergrowth, matted together by tough creepers. The ground itself was often no more than marshland deceptively covered by moss, which gave way under the slightest pressure. It was impossible to build roads in time for any rapid progress of artillery. For both columns, the jungle itself became the main obstacle.

Sir Peter Benson Maxwell, ex-Chief Justice, now retired, contributed his own sardonic comments on the military situation: 'Up came the Buffs and the Blue-jackets; the Goorkhas and the artillery: and the Hong Kong troops and the Madras sappers and miners . . . The electric wire, let us hope, was to the fore and the engineers were surely not left behind. Everthing seemed complete; and yet there was a want — an uncommon want. Where was the enemy?'

If the word 'enemy' was intended to refer to Birch's murderers, the troops from Hongkong and India contributed little to their capture. The assassins were eventually apprehended by small parties of police with a minimum of arms — and no artillery. Most of the culprits were arrested after the overseas soldiers had departed. Nevertheless, on 4th February 1876, the Governor issued a *Gazette Extraordinary* stating that the overseas troops which had been sent to Perak to 'punish the murderers of the late Mr Birch' had 'surmounted all obstacles' and destroyed all resistance. This was designed to support the myth that their presence had somehow been necessary.

Seputum was one of the first of the malefactors to be captured. Convicted by a Malay court, he was hanged at Bandar Bahru on 20th May 1876. Investigations continued throughout the year, and in December, the Maharaja Lela, Pandak Indut, and five other accomplices were tried before two Malay chiefs at Matang in Larut. All were found guilty. The Maharaja, Pandak Indut and a Dato Sager were hanged on 20th January 1877, in Larut. The remaining four were sentenced to life imprisonment.

In the course of the inquiries which had led to these convictions, it became evident that Sultan Abdullah had played an active part in plotting Birch's demise. The Mentri of Larut had also attempted to make trouble after the murder. However, the British Government recognized that it would be optimistic to expect a Perak court to convict their erstwhile Rulers. Abdullah, with the Mentri and two other senior chiefs, were therefore banished indefinitely to the Seychelles.

After many weeks of jungle wanderings, ex-Sultan Ismail arrived at the Kedah border. Now impoverished, even hungry, Ismail willingly accepted the advice of the Sultan of Kedah and surrendered himself to the British authorities in Penang. He was sent, under escort, to Singapore where he handed over the regalia of Perak to Jervois. As there was no firm evidence linking him with Birch's murder, Ismail was allowed to retire quietly in Singapore. His pension was paid 'from the revenues of Perak', which, as John Russell read, were now being efficiently collected by the Straits Settlements' Government.

Pax Britannica

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During these winter days of January 1890, when John Russell was eagerly absorbing these salient facts about Malaya, he must have been constantly reminded of the differences between England and the tropics. From the windows of the library, he could look out over the gaunt leafless trees lining the street below. He knew that before their bare branches came to life again, he and his family would be surrounded by the evergreen vegetation of Malaya. The bitter weather which he often encountered on his daily journeys would be replaced by a constant humid heat: no winter, no spring, no autumn — nothing except perpetual summer. In the evenings, at home in New Malden, he and Frances could smile as they huddled over their flickering coals, knowing that they would soon be living in a country where domestic fires were unnecessary.

Another aspect of life in Malaya which intrigued him was the scarcity of Europeans. Neither he nor Frances had met many Orientals, and he wondered in what ways Malays, Chinese, or Indians might differ from themselves. Naturally, he expected the various nationalities to speak in their own mother tongues — but what about written languages? Did each segment of the population have its own schools? And what about the English language? Mr Dishman had said that Kuala Lumpur had only kindergartens for British children, so how would people of other races learn English? All the *Government Gazettes*, hitherto printed in Singapore, were in English; presumably all the printers could read the language — or could they? Although these questions must have fascinated John, he would have to postpone enlightenment until he arrived in Malaya.

Continuing his study of the records, John was left in no doubt that the massive intervention of British forces in Perak — although excessive — had permanently affected relations between the Straits Settlements' authorities and local leaders throughout the peninsula. It was now clear to the rulers of all the states that the British were determined to exert their influence, by force if necessary, and that resistance was useless. In addition, foreign powers such as Holland and France would have noted the speed with which the British had reinforced their Malayan garrison.

After reading the critical telegrams from Lord Carnarvon to Jervois, John Russell might have thought that the Governor's radical divergence from Colonial Office policies would have placed his future in jeopardy. It had become clear, however, that influential citizens, inside and outside Parliament, approved of the Governor's firm action in Perak, causing Carnarvon to modify his views to the extent that Jervois — somewhat to his own astonishment — was shortly promoted to become the new Governor of South Australia. Nevertheless, Carnarvon insisted that the title 'Queen's Commissioner' must be dropped in Malaya, and that the original name of 'British Resident' be restored. He also emphasized that, in future, official policies for Malaya would be decided in London, not in Singapore. All this

was spelt out to the next Governor, Sir William Robinson, who spent four years obeying Colonial Office instructions as replacement to Jervois.

Within a few months of the restoration of peace in Perak, J.G. Davidson, who had replaced Birch as Resident, resigned, and resumed his legal practice in Singapore. It was then decided to offer the Perak Residency to Mr Hugh Low, who was the Colonial Secretary on Labuan island. Low, who spoke Malay fluently, was a fifty-three year old widower, whose only child was married to the Governor of Hongkong. Besides being a most efficient administrator, Hugh Low had a deep understanding of the Malay psyche, and this quality, combined with endless patience and resourcefulness, made him an ideal Resident. William Maxwell was appointed to be his Assistant Resident in Taiping, replacing the gallant Captain Speedy, who was relegated to a subordinate position — at half his previous salary — in Lower Perak. Not unnaturally, Speedy soon resigned, and dropped out of Malayan history. He sought more action than Lower Perak could provide.

Despite his lack of seniority, Frank Swettenham, a somewhat conceited young man, was disappointed that he was not made the new Resident of Selangor. In 1876, the post was given to 'Captain' Bloomfield Douglas, an elderly man. This was an unfortunate choice. Bloomfield Douglas, who had previously commanded Raja Brooke's yacht in Sarawak, was neither a qualified sea captain, nor a competent administrator. His main attributes appeared to be some knowledge of the Malay language and a loud voice. He established his first headquarters in Port Klang, where he was accompanied by his wife and two daughters. Basically a coward, Bloomfield Douglas lived in constant fear of attack by imaginary enemies. He spent many hours drilling his Indian police guards, thereby exercising his vocal powers to their maximum extent.

Frank Swettenham did not return to Selangor as Assistant Resident. Instead, he was posted to Singapore where he served as an assistant to the Colonial Secretary, with particular responsibility for affairs in the Malay States.

In Perak, a fresh group of junior government officers came on the heels of the departed troops. These included a Collector and Magistrate for Larut, a Clerk of Court, a Customs Officer, an Overseer of Rivers and Roads, a Revenue Officer, a Shipmaster, a Surveyor, and a Police Superintendent. All these were supervised by Hugh Low and his Assistant Resident, William Maxwell. The purpose of this ever-increasing coterie of government officers was the collection of revenue. British Government policy laid down that each state should be self-supporting, and the status of all government officers depended on their success in raising money from the local population. Perak was already the richest state in the peninsula due to its revived, and flourishing, tin industry. None the less, Hugh Low was most economically minded, and frowned on any extravagance — an example which William Maxwell was careful to follow. At the same time, they made sure that proper allowances were paid to all entitled chiefs who had survived the recent holocaust. The most senior of these was Raja Yusoff, who now assumed the Sultanate — a position he had always claimed. His son-in-law, Raja Idris, was sent to England and groomed to become his successor.

Progress was not so impressive in Selangor, largely because taxes on the tin mines near Kuala Lumpur — the main source of revenue — had never been

properly collected. Since the end of the internecine 'civil war', there had been a steady rise in the number of new government officers. Unfortunately, due to lack of supervision by 'Captain' Bloomfield Douglas and his senior assistants, these men had quickly become lazy and demoralized. Soon there were rumours of nepotism and corruption on the part of the Resident — rumours difficult to either prove or disprove. It was, however, a fact that Bloomfield Douglas appointed his son-in-law, Dominic Daly, to be the State Surveyor, an important post which embraced all land transactions. From visitors to his desk in Singapore, and from his own fairly frequent tours of inspection, Swettenham was able to keep himself well-informed about events and rumours in the peninsula.

An innovation, decreed by London, was the establishment of State Councils in the states with British Residents. These State Councils included, as members, senior royalty — usually the Sultan — and appointed representatives of the various races. The Sultan, or his nominee, was Chairman. Despite the trappings always associated with the meetings of these Councils — finery of apparel, bands and honour guards — in practice they merely set the stamp of approval on decisions already taken by the British Residents. New laws, taxes and regulations were not issued 'In the name of the Sultan on the advice of the Resident', but 'By the Ruler in Council'. Council proceedings were confidential, but if a measure proved popular, a member was happy to accept his share of the kudos. If unpopular, the member could claim to have been out-voted by a majority. Members knew that if they argued with the British Resident, they would simply be dropped from the Council.

To be effective, every meeting of a State Council had to be meticulously stage-managed, and participants encouraged to believe that they were performing an essential public service. Great tact was required from the Resident to ensure that the show ran smoothly. Hugh Low, having had previous council experience in Borneo, proved to be an expert in the art of controlling the State Council of Perak. By his courteous regard for royalty, combined with practical knowledge of sound government, he gained the lasting respect of the leaders of the community. On the other hand, in Selangor, Bloomfield Douglas was quite incapable of either organizing or controlling the State Council. With all the pomp at his command, he failed to attract the interest of the old Sultan, who declined to attend routine meetings, and who deputed a relative to be permanent Chairman. Neither did he win the confidence of the nominated members, the most influential of whom, Yap Ah Loy, was undoubtedly the most powerful community leader in Selangor.

Among the official papers of 1879, John Russell would have come across the name of Isabella Bird, an altogether unusual visitor to Malaya. Isabella Bird was a forty seven year old spinster, who had already travelled extensively in Australia, New Zealand, and America, and who was then returning to England after a seven month visit to Japan. While in Hongkong, Miss Bird had met Acting Chief Justice Snowden, who persuaded her to break her journey at Singapore so that she might see something of Malaya on her way home. Snowden then gave her letters of introduction to the Governor and to the Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements. From the moment of her arrival in Singapore, Isabella Bird was therefore treated as an honoured guest and accorded certain 'government facilities'.

A well-educated and intelligent traveller, Miss Bird was the author of several books based on her experiences: *The Englishwoman in America*, *The Hawaiian Archipelago*, and *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*. She had a penetrating eye for exact detail, a good knowledge of flora and fauna, an intuitive perception about people, and a habit of making immediate judgements. After a short stay in Malacca, Isabella Bird decided that she would like to see Sungei Ujong, Selangor and Perak. These journeys were arranged for her at some inconvenience: a spinster Englishwoman, travelling alone, threw burden on to the government officials responsible for her welfare. John Russell was intrigued to read of Miss Bird's method of recording: Isabella had a sister, her only close relative, to whom she wrote every few days. Her sister then edited these letters, arranged the material into chapters, and took charge of printing and proof-reading. John saw that this method of authorship had the disadvantage of admitting numerous inaccuracies, which could have been corrected after more careful research. The book which resulted from the Malayan letters was not published until 1883, although occasional footnotes recorded important changes since the author's visit in 1879. This book bore the somewhat pretentious title of *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither*. The Colonial Office library contained a copy, which was produced for John's perusal. The librarian no doubt explained that the word 'chersonese', never in common use, was derived from the Greek word *khersonese*, meaning peninsula.

After skimming briefly through Isabella Bird's pages on Singapore, Malacca, and Sungei Ujong, John Russell read the description of her stay in Selangor with the added interest of knowing that he and his family would soon be arriving in Port Klang — her own point of entry eleven years ago.

> *'British Residency, Klang, Selangor. — You will not know where Klang is, and I think you won't find it in any atlas or encyclopaedia. Indeed, I almost doubt whether you will find Selangor, the Malay State of which Klang is, after a fashion, the capital.'*
>
> *'Selangor is bounded on the north by the "protected" State of Perak, which became notorious in England a few years ago for a "little war", in which we inflicted a very heavy chastisement on the Malays for the assassination of Mr. Birch, the British Resident . . . Klang is on the Klang river . . . I call it "the capital after a fashion", because the Resident and his myrmidons live here, and because vessels which draw thirteen feet of water can go no higher; but the true capital, created by the enterprise of Chinamen, is thirty-six miles farther inland, the tin-mining settlement of Kwala Lumpor. Selangor thrives, if it does thrive, which I greatly doubt, on tin and gutta; but Klang is a most mis-thriven, decayed, dejected, miserable looking place. The nominal ruler of Selangor is Sultan Abdul Samat . . .'*

Isabella Bird follows this rather ungracious opening by referring to the pleasant time she spent in Malacca and by a description of a night at sea. She then reverts to Selangor:

> *'At daybreak the next morning we were steaming up the Klang river, whose low shores are entirely mangrove swamps, and when the sun was high and hot we anchored in front of the village of Klang, where a large fort on an eminence, with grass embankments in which guns were mounted, is the first*

prominent object. Above this is a large wooden bungalow with an attap *roof, which is the British Residency. There was no air, and the British ensign in front of the house hung limp on the flagstaff. Below there is a village, with clusters of Chinese houses on the ground, and Malay houses on stilts, standing singly, with one or two Government offices, bulking largely among them. A substantial flight of stone steps leads from the river to a skeleton jetty with an* attap *roof, and near it a number of* attap*-roofed boats were lying, loaded with slabs of tin from the diggings in the interior, to be transhipped to Pinang. A dainty steam-launch, the* Abdulsamat, *nominally the Sultan's yacht, flying a large red and yellow flag, was also lying in the river.'*

'Mr. Bloomfield Douglas, the Resident, a tall, vigorous, elderly man, with white hair, a florid complexion, and a strong voice heard everywhere in authoritative tones, met me with a four-oared boat, and a buggy with a good Australian horse brought me here. From this house there is a large but not a beautiful view of river windings, rolling jungle, and blue hills. The lower part of the house, which is supported on pillars, is mainly open, and is used for billiard-room, church, lounging-room, afternoon tea-room, and audience-room; but I see nothing of the friendly, easy going, to and fro of Chinese and Malays, which was a pleasant feature of the Residency in Sungei Ujong. In fact there is here much of the appearance of an armed post amidst a hostile population. In front of the Residency there is a six-pounder flanked by two piles of shot. Behind it there is a guard-room, with racks of rifles and bayonets for the Resident's body-guard of twelve men, and quarters for the married soldiers, for soldiers they are, although they are called policemen. A gong hangs in front of the porch on which to sound the alarm, and a hundred men fully armed can turn out at five minutes' notice.'

'Whatever enterprise I hear of in the interior is always in the hands of Chinamen. Klang looks as if an incubus oppressed it, and possibly the Chinese are glad to be as far as possible from the seat of what impresses me as a fussy Government. At all events, Klang, from whatever cause, has a blighted look, and deserted houses rapidly falling into decay, overgrown roads, fields choked with weeds, and an absence of life and traffic in the melancholy streets, have a depressing influence. The people are harassed by a vexatious and uncertain system of fees and taxes, calculated to engender ill feelings, and things connected with the administration seem somewhat 'mixed'.'

This was strong public criticism of Selangor's administration from a guest who was staying in the Residency, and who was living and travelling at government expense. Despite her general disparagement, Isabella Bird had no hesitation in joining the Resident's party for a visit to the Sultan at Langat, in the *Abdulsamat*.

'The yacht is perfection. The cabin, in which ten can dine, is high and airy, and, being forward, there is no vibration. Space is exquisitely utilised by all manner of contrivances . . .'

After they arrived at Langat, Miss Bird described their audience with the Sultan:

'The Sultan sat on a high-backed, carved chair or throne. All the other chairs were plain. The Resident sat on his right, I on his left, and on my left the Raja

Moussa, *with other sons of the Sultan, and some native princes. Mr Syers acted as interpreter. Outside there were double lines of military police, and the bright adjacent slopes were covered with the Sultan's followers and other Malays. The balcony of the audience-hall, which has a handsome balustrade, was full of Malay followers in bright reds and cool white. It was all beautiful, and the palms rustled in the soft air, and bright birds and butterflies flew overhead, rejoicing in mere existence.'*

'If Abdulsamat were not Sultan, I should pick him out as the most prepossessing Malay that I have seen. He is an elderly man, with iron-gray hair, a high and prominent brow, large prominent dark eyes, a well-formed nose, and a good mouth. The face is bright, kindly, and fairly intelligent. He is about the middle height . . .'

Mr Syers, mentioned in this extract, was the Superintendent of Police in Selangor. He had begun his career as a soldier with the 10th Regiment, stationed in Singapore. After reaching the rank of non-commissioned officer, he was appointed to be the first British police officer in Selangor. Isabella Bird described him as 'the admirable superintendent of police', and apparently appreciated his respect and kindness towards her.

'I have been to the fort, the large barrack of the military police, and Mr. Syers showed me many things. In the first place, a snake about eight feet long was let out and killed. The Malays call this a two-headed snake, and there is enough to give rise to the ignorant statement, for after the proper head was dead the tail stood up and moved forward. The skin of this reptile was marked throughout with broad bands of black and white alternatively. There was an ill-favoured skull of a crocodile hanging up to dry, with teeth three inches long. One day lately a poor Hadji *was carried off by one, and shortly afterwards this monster was caught, and on opening it they found the skull of the* Hadji, *part of his body, a bit of his clothing, and part of a goat. I brought away as spoils tiger's teeth and claws, crocodile's teeth, bear's teeth, etc.'*

Isabella Bird also visited two coastal villages before leaving Selangor, but these visits did nothing to improve her general opinion of the state. By implication she was critical of Bloomfield Douglas:

'There must surely be a want of the right kind of vigour in the administration, and a laisser-aller *on the part of some of the minor officials, the result of which is that the great capabilities of the State are not developed . . .'*

She reserved her compliments for Harry Syers:

'Mr. Syers, the superintendent of military police, appears a thoroughly efficient man, as sensible in his views of what would conduce to the advancement of the State as he is conscientious and careful in all matters of detail which concern his rather complicated position. He is a student of the people of the country, speaks Malay fluently, and for a European seems to have a sympathetic understanding of the Malays, is studying the Chinese and their language, as well as the flora, fauna, and geology of the country, and is altogether unpretending. I have formed a very high opinion of him, and should rely implicitly on anything which he told me as a fact.'

From the latest *Gazettes*, which lay at the top of his reference papers, John Russell would have been interested to see that Harry Syers was still the Superintendent of Police, Selangor, and he would soon have him as a colleague. Even the 'elderly' Sultan appeared to be still reigning with his usual sagacity.

Owing to the lack of roads between Selangor and Perak, it was convenient for Isabella Bird to sail first to Penang, and from there to Larut. At that time, it happened that Sir William Robinson was returning to England after his tour of duty as Governor, and Bloomfield Douglas decided to sail to Penang to bid him farewell. Borrowing the Sultan's excellent yacht, the Selangor Resident was able to offer Miss Bird a fortuitous passage to Penang. Typically, Bloomfield Douglas was also accompanied by members of his bodyguard attired in their most magnificent uniforms. Shortly after their arrival in Penang, Miss Bird was invited for breakfast on the Governor's ship where she met Hugh Low, the Perak Resident, and his Assistant, William Maxwell.

While Hugh Low remained in Penang on government business, Miss Bird sailed to Larut with a small party of officials led by Maxwell. They landed near Matang at the mouth of the Larut river, and then travelled in three two-wheeled carts to Taiping — an uncomfortable eight-mile journey. Eventually they reached the mining settlement at the foot of the mountains. Miss Bird describes Taiping:

> *'. . . this important Chinese town, with a street about a mile long, with large bazaars and shops making a fine appearance, being much decorated in Chinese style; halls of meeting for the different tribes, gambling houses, workshops, the Treasury, a substantial dark wooden building, large detached barracks for the Sikh police, a hospital, a powder magazine, a parade ground, a Government storehouse, a large new jail, neat bungalows for the minor English officials, and on the top of a steep, isolated terraced hill, the British Residency.'*

In fact, the house to which Miss Bird refers was not the British Residency of Perak. This was the house which Speedy had built for himself when Assistant Resident, and which William Maxwell had now inherited. Hugh Low had built a new British Residency at Kuala Kangsa, over the mountains on the Perak River. Isabella Bird was fascinated by the Taiping house:

> *'The Residency is large and lofty, and thoroughly draughty, a high commendation so near the equator. It consists of a room about thirty feet wide by sixty long, and about twenty feet high at its highest part, open at both ends, the front end a great bow window without glass, opening on an immense verandah . . . There are no ornaments or superfluities. There are two simple meals daily, with tea and bananas at 7 a.m.., and afternoon tea at 5 p.m. Mr. Maxwell is most abstemious, and is energetically at work from an early hour in the morning. There is a perpetual coming and going of Malays, and an air of business without fuss.'*

Later, in her writing, John Russell got a perceptive woman's insight into the character of his future superior officer:

> *'Mr. Maxwell is very pleasant, strong, both physically and mentally, clever and upright . . . He is able, combative, dogmatic, well-read and well-informed,*

expresses himself incisively, is self-reliant, strong-willed, thoroughly just, thoroughly a gentleman, and has immense energy and business capacity. He, too, likes talking, and talks well, but with much perfectly good-natured vehemence. He is a man on whose word one may implicitly rely. Brought up among Malays, and speaking their language idiomatically, he not only likes them, but takes the trouble to understand them and enter into their ideas and feelings. He studies their literature, superstitions, and customs carefully, and has made some valuable notes upon them. I should think that few people understand the Malays better than he does . . .'

Although these words apparently depicted William Maxwell as a paragon of virtue, John Russell discovered that in an unpublished letter Isabella Bird had also described him as "bumptious and without tenderness" — a typical sting in the tail. John, however, would have considered that if only half her previous compliments were true, Maxwell appeared to be a conscientious, just, and pleasant man, whom it would be an honour to serve. He knew that successful young men were frequently regarded as 'bumptious' by their elders. Also, these opinions had been formed eleven years ago, and John Russell was eager to learn what progress had been made in Malaya during those years.

After Miss Bird's departure in 1879, Bloomfield Douglas was ordered to move the Selangor Residency from Klang to Kuala Lumpur. This move was probably recommended by Swettenham to the new Governor, Sir Frederick Weld, because of the rapid growth of Chinese tin mines in the area. There had been an improvement in the international tin price, and Kuala Lumpur's population had increased to about two thousand inhabitants, living in the most appalling conditions. The 'town' consisted of an open market with an *attap* roof, a large gambling hall, a brothel composed of dirty dark cubicles, shops selling opium and liquor, and a cluster of wooden houses with *attap* roofs interspersed with stinking drains. Yap Ah Loy owned a large part of the town, and took a hand in most of the money-making activities. Until the arrival of Bloomfield Douglas with his new Residency, Yap Ah Loy had regarded Kuala Lumpur and its surrounding areas as more or less his own bailiwick, and as the recognized Capitan China, he resented all criticism of his primitive administration.

The largest part of the evil-smelling township lay on one bank of the muddy Klang River; naturally, therefore, Bloomfield Douglas built his Residency on the opposite side, on top of a small hill. Immediately below his new headquarters, the Resident commandeered a large section of flat land as a parade ground for his troops. This lay close to the river, and was claimed by Yap Ah Loy, who said it was his 'vegetable garden'. This dispute caused permanent friction between the two men, and was never satisfactorily resolved. This piece of land afterwards became known as the 'padang', or playing field, of the town.

Despite inevitable disagreements, however, Yap Ah Loy had the good sense to realize that British government offered the only immediate hope for peace and progress in Selangor. This was made clear to Sir Frederick Weld on his first visit to Kuala Lumpur in 1880, when Yap Ah Loy went out of his way to demonstrate his loyalty, even arranging a theatrical performance to illustrate how all the Chinese were happy to place themselves under the Governor's

protection. Flattered though he was, Weld soon came to believe that there could be none of the expected progress in Selangor so long as Bloomfield Douglas was in command. No doubt persuaded by Frank Swettenham's highly critical reports, the Governor eventually forced the resignation of the Resident in August 1882, and during the following months there was much speculation about a successor. Maxwell and Swettenham were the two principal contenders. Although Maxwell was senior to his rival, Swettenham had won Weld's confidence, and was duly appointed Resident of Selangor in December 1882 — much to Maxwell's disgust. Thus, at the age of thirty-two, Swettenham was given the task of turning Kuala Lumpur into a capital worthy of the growing wealth of the State.

William Maxwell, hard-working and with a knowledge of the country and its people at least equal to that of Swettenham, naturally felt that he had been unfairly passed over in seniority, especially as he was now a married man with four small children. Knowing that for some years Maxwell had been studying the Malay traditional land laws, the Governor arranged for him to spend several months in Australia to absorb the latest conveyancing legislation as practised in that country. On his return, Weld appointed him Commissioner of Land for the Straits Settlements, with a salary slightly better than that of an Assistant Resident.

As British Resident, Frank Swettenham hit Selangor like a reforming zealot. The long-clogged drains of Kuala Lumpur were cleaned and enlarged; narrow pathways were widened into roads; slaughter-houses, pigsties, and brothels were removed from the town centre; concentrations of rickety slum houses with inflammable roofs were demolished; idle and drunken government officers were dismissed; new government offices built of brick were erected; the entire town was newly surveyed and properly subdivided for building sites and new roads. By making these and other changes, Swettenham was at pains to demonstrate his fitness for the new job, and Sir Frederick Weld was able to dispatch glowing reports of progress to the Colonial Office.

Yap Ah Loy had been delighted at the departure of Bloomfield Douglas and Daly, the chief surveyor. He had known Swettenham, on and off, for more than ten years, but it is unlikely that he anticipated the young Englishman's ruthless determination after he became British Resident. Although they had many disputes and disagreements, mostly concerning Yap Ah Loy's property, a mutual respect grew between them, and when Yap died, in 1885, it was Swettenham who ordered the British flag to be flown at half-mast as a mark of respect.

John Russell's dwindling pile of papers had now brought him into recent times. Hugh Low had retired as Resident of Perak in the previous year of 1889, after serving for twelve years in that post. He had been awarded a well-deserved knighthood, and he had made his retirement home in Italy. Perak was, of course, by far the senior state because of its tin wealth, and it was inevitable that the Residency should now be given to Swettenham, especially in view of his ostensible success in Selangor. William Maxwell, perhaps somewhat bitterly, at last became the British Resident in Kuala Lumpur. He soon found much to critize in the administration of his predecessor and rival, and immediately set about making improvements.

When John Russell laid aside the last of the *Gazettes* and reports, no doubt he was glad to have acquired at least some knowledge of his new country which was clearly still in the developing stage, and he looked forward to meeting some of the pioneers. He was proud to know that he would soon be serving beside them.

Waters of Empire

6

On the 17th of January, 1890, Mr Blake, the Crown Agent who had attested John Russell's entry into Her Majesty's Service, sent a copy of his contract to the Colonial Secretary, Singapore. He added: 'Passages have been provided for Mr Russell and his family in the steamship which will leave London during the first week in February next; and he has been instructed to report himself to you on his arrival.'

Mr Blake's staff had booked passages for the Russell family on the Glen Line steamship, *Glengarry*, which was then in Antwerp loading cargo for the Far East. This ship was expected to return to London at the end of January for more cargo and passengers, after which she would begin her eastern voyage. Unfortunately, on her return trip from Antwerp, the *Glengarry* was in collision with a schooner, the *Isabella*, and although she arrived at the London docks on 27th January, she was delayed for the inevitable inquiry and repairs, and could not leave until 12th February. Delays of this kind were troublesome and expensive for all concerned, including shipping companies, insurers, cargo owners, and passengers. This particular delay was especially disruptive for the Russells, who were reduced to living out of suitcases for an extra week, and had to depend on friends and relatives during their final days in New Malden.

Because all their heavy luggage had been sent to the ship almost two weeks before their eventual day of departure, the seven family members and their hand luggage could all fit into a single hackney-carriage, on their way from the railway station to the docks. At that time, the London docks formed the hub of the still-expanding British Empire. London was the largest, busiest, and most prestigious port in the world.

The Port of London embraced both banks of the River Thames. Regrettably, from the city to the sea, the river was so permeated with filthy pollutants as to be almost black. It also stank: the river-side windows of the Houses of Parliament frequently had to be closed against the stench. It was to be many years before the Thames ceased to function as a public sewer. During the ill-favoured months, which included February, the London docks were often cloaked in either fog, mist, rain, or sleet. The approach roads, or lanes, were lined with towering warehouses which imposed a perpetual air of gloom upon the traffic below.

However, despite the reeking river, the often invisible skies, and the grim approaches, the Port of London was far from moribund. By day and night, the cries and commands of draymen, coachmen, warehousemen, cargo handlers, tally-clerks, shipping agents, sailors and ships' officers created a pulsating clamour of vibrant life.

The quays were lined with ships of all sizes, descriptions and nationalities, from wooden hulks to the latest liners; these were closely moored in friendly proximity, the bow of each vessel a few yards from another's stern. However,

S.S. "Glengarry (Webster) (~~Seabird~~)" Voyage No. 16

Port.	Arrived.		Sailed.		
			1890		
London	Dec	20	Jan.	9	
Antwerp	Jan	10	"	26	
London	"	24	Feb	19	
*In collision with schooner "Isabella"					
Gibraltar	passed	22	"	18	a.m.
Malta	Feb	22	"	22	
Port Said	Feb	26			
Suez			"	24	
Singapore	March	20	March	22	
HongKong	"	28	"	31	
Shanghai	April	3	April	10	
Kobe	"	13	"	18	
Yokohama	"	10	April	22	
Kobe	"	23	"	30	
Shanghai	May	3	May	4	
Hankow	May	10	June	1	
Woosung	passed		June	3	
HongKong	June	15	"	17	
Singapore	"	13	"	14	
Penang	"	16	"	17	
Perim	July	3	July	3	
Suez	"	8			
Port Said			"	9	
London	"	23rd			

Laid up

Not taken off hire

armed with the names of the dock and the ship, the Russells' coachman would have had no difficulty in finding the *Glengarry*. The children's excitement at their first sight of the ship can well be imagined.

S.S. *Glengarry* had been built in 1883 in Glasgow by the London & Glasgow Co., Ltd. She had a tonnage of 3035: a sizeable cargo carrier in 1890. Having been built only seven years before, she was regarded as a modern ship. Designed for the tropics as well as for colder climes, her passenger cabins were somewhat larger than those found in northern vessels, and two of these cabins had been reserved for the Russell family.

Each cabin was equipped with four berths arranged in vertical pairs, with an extendable table in the centre, and an adjacent compartment for the bath-room and lavatory. On the February day of their embarkation, the Russells were no doubt glad to find that hot pipes from the ship's boilers kept the cabins pleasantly warm. An electric light was fitted in the ceiling of each cabin, and electric fans were installed for use in the tropics. Soon after their welcome on board, the Russells would have been shown the ship's main amenities, which consisted of a saloon and a dining-room. The saloon was carpeted, and contained several small tables, comfortable chairs, a bar, and the ship's library which was housed in an elegant bookcase. The pride of the establishment, however, was the passengers' dining-room: wood-panelled, the room reflected the height of Victorian taste. A single long table, replete with brillantwhite tablecloth and napkins, held elaborate place-settings for twenty diners. The Russells were told that the ship's Master, Captain Webster, frequently dined with the passengers, at the head of the table. They were also reminded, although they had already been forewarned, that passengers were required to wear evening dress for dinner in the dining-room. Children would be fed separately.

Shortly after her last cargo hatch had been battened down, and her final passenger embarked, the *Glengarry* was unleased from her quay-side bonds and guided into the mainstream of the river, ready to begin her run to the Far East.

The tradition of fast cargoes between Britain and China had been established in earlier years by sailing clippers in the tea trade, the most renowned of which was the *Cutty Sark*. Following her lead, British shipping companies, including the Glen Line, had adopted Benjamin Franklin's principle of 'time is money', and had built their ships accordingly. In practice, this meant that steamers such as the *Glengarry* could sail for long distances without having to refuel their bunkers *en route*. Thus it was that, having spent six days at sea, the Russells were probably disappointed at passing through the Strait of Gibraltar without stopping, especially as the famous rock would have seemed almost within touching distance. Despite this, they were several degrees more comfortable, away from the heaving billows of the Atlantic and the Bay of Biscay, and into the more moderate seas and warmer climate of the Mediterranean. After another three days, on 22nd February, the *Glengarry* came alongside the wharfs of Valletta, on the British island of Malta. There, for a few hours at least, the passengers were able to stretch their legs on shore. The children especially would have enjoyed this brief respite from shipboard restrictions. However, before midnight on the same day, all passengers had re-embarked for the next stage of their journey.

***Captain** Webster's **journal** of S. S.* Glengarry *for the voyage which brought the Russell family to Singapore in 1890. Under the entry for January 27 is noted 'In collision with Schooner "Isabella"'. (By courtesy of Ocean Transport & Trading Plc. Liverpool).*

Since its opening in 1869, the Suez Canal had proved of vital importance to communications with India, Burma, and British possessions further east. By 1890, British ships formed the majority of canal users. Disraeli's brillant purchase of Suez shares in 1875 had given Britain a measure of control over the water-way, which reflected its value to the Empire. A voyage from London to Singapore via South Africa entailed a distance of 11,800 miles, whereas, via Suez, this was reduced to 8,300 miles. The entry point for vessels sailing east was Port Said, where convoys were lined up to ensure orderly progress through the narrow channel. Ships emerged 100 miles south, at Suez, from whence they had access to the Indian Ocean via the Red Sea.

As their ship slowly approached Port Said, the Russells were probably surprised to see the large number of vessels around them. These were either waiting to enter the canal, or had recently emerged from it, or were engaged in trading in the port itself. Almost as soon as the anchor had been lowered, the *Glengarry* was besieged by bum-boats which congregated below the passengers' cabins to port and starboard. These boats, whose occupants appeared to be Egyptians, Turks, and Arabs, carried cargoes ranging from fresh fruit and sweetmeats to wooden, leather, ivory and stone souvenirs, which were offered for sale with screeching enthusiasm. The bum-boats were accompanied by a group of skinny boys who swam naked near the ship, their bodies burnt almost black by the sun. These youngsters implored passengers to throw coins to them by way of 'baksheesh'. When a coin was thrown into the sea, one of them would dive and recover it. In some cases, this involved staying under water for what seemed an incredible length of time, adding a thrill of apprehension to the aquatics.

At that time, almost two full days were required to pass through the canal, even though the entire channel had been cut to sea level, and there were no locks. The *Glengarry* sailed from Port Said on 26th February 1890, and arrived at Suez on the 27th. On both banks of the canal, the land was largely desert, with increasingly warm winds as the ship moved slowly southwards. The passengers amused themselves by watching their companion vessels, fore and aft, and by following the progress of occasional camel trains. These invariably comprised camels with a single hump; a type of dromedary found in both Arabia and North Africa. Despite the desert heat, the Arab cameleers were swathed from head to foot in clothing, which even covered a large part of their faces. It was at this point in their journey that passengers were warned of the danger of heat-stroke, and were advised to wear sola topis or pith helmets. They were also advised to cover their arms and legs against sunburn.

As if resentful of the sluggish hours spent navigating the desert, the *Glengarry* wasted no time at the bustling port of Suez, but pressed onwards into the searing heat of the Red Sea. Now, cabin port-holes were thrown open, electric fans were running continuously, water and cordials were in endless demand, and perspiring bodies kept the ship's laundry working overtime. Cabins which had once seemed generously large, soon became almost unbearably restrictive — even a shower of warm sea-water in the cabin's tiny bathroom gave only temporary relief. However, John and Frances would make sure that the children had regular showers, and that the boys were always cleanly and neatly dressed when they were allowed into the saloon, which, because of its size and number of fans was noticeably cooler than their smaller cabins.

The elder children would have learned from a map shown to them by their father that they were now sailing in the Red Sea, and were probably curious to know why it was called by this name. If they watched the sea very carefully, they might find the reason. Sure enough, not long afterwards, the children would see that the water all around the ship had suddenly become red — or at least pink. This strange effect was caused by blue-green algae, or sea-weed, which sometimes appeared on the surface and reacted to sunlight by turning red. However, this phenomenon was soon left behind.

Without stopping at either Djibouti to starboard, or Aden to port, the *Glengarry* hastened into the Indian Ocean, heading towards the Equator. During the following days, the heat ceased to be a novelty. Day after day the sun shone with a merciless glare; metal, and even wood, exposed to sunlight became unbearable to the touch. Passengers were now reduced to spending long hours in a state of undress in their sweltering cabins, where the electric fans merely stirred the humid air, giving almost no relief. Nevertheless, the evening ritual of dressing for dinner was scrupulously observed. This ordeal was bad enough for men wearing double-breasted evening jackets. It was worse for women, who were confined in tight-fitting corsets and several layers of underwear. Cosmetics were ineffective on skin saturated in perspiration. In the event, female passengers frequently chose to remain in their cabins, rather than undergo the discomfort of formal evening meals.

The confinement of shipboard life was felt most particularly by the children, who were compelled to spend a large part of each day out of direct sunlight, in their cabin. Their father probably did his best to keep them occupied by setting aside period of 'schooling', and by playing games. Regardless of the somewhat trying circumstances, John Russell would have enjoyed the time which he was now able to spend with his sons. George Dearie, the eldest, was now 10, John Archibald, 9, Philip Charles, 5, Donald Oscar, 2 and a half, and Robert Cecil, 5 months. Naturally the older boys would remember this voyage as a great adventure, their young minds being at a most receptive stage. John Russell would have been careful to explain every new wonder which they encountered, learning a good deal himself in the process. Deficiencies in the saloon's library would be balanced by the extraordinary range of knowledge on the part of the ship's officers and other passengers. But despite the excitement of new discoveries, and the advent of flying-fish and porpoises, whose antics could be watched from cabin port-holes, these days in the Indian Ocean would have seemed increasingly oppressive.

Meanwhile, in Selangor, the house and office of the British Resident stood on top of a small hill, overlooking the growing settlement of Kuala Lumpur. A large single-storey bungalow, raised from the ground on pillars, the Residency also contained the council chamber for the legislators of Selangor. Apart from the palace of the Sultan at Langat on the coast, the Residency was the most prestigious building in the State.

Inside the Resident's spacious study, the broad rectangular punkah swung steadily back and forth above an imposing desk. This contraption was kept in motion by an Indian boy who sat outside on the verandah with the rope tied

to one of his toes. Behind the desk, William Edward Maxwell peered with irritation at the minute-paper in front of him. A calendar on his desk showed the date as 27th February, 1890. Maxwell was studying a note from the Colonial Secretary, Singapore, telling him that the new Selangor Government Printer and a substantial family were already on the high seas, and expected to arrive within the next three weeks.

A few weeks before, knowing that no government quarters were available for the Russell family, nor any building suitable for a printing office, Maxwell had instructed the Superintendent of Public Works to rent the necessary buildings, although he must have known, or at least suspected, that because of the rapid growth of business in Kuala Lumpur, this would be quite impossible. Plans for a printing office had already been approved, but it would be some time before it could be built. Housing for the Russells was a more urgent matter. There were no hotels, hostels, or boarding-houses in Kuala Lumpur, and accommodation for a family of seven presented a most awkward problem. Establishing a Government Printing Office in Selangor had been Maxwell's own idea, and three months before the end of 1889 he was informed that this item would be included in the 1890 estimates. He now feared that he would be accused of tardiness if there was no shelter for the Russells. Anxious to record his actions as speedily as possible, he wrote a stiff minute to the Superintendent of the Public Works Department.

'I have directed you to rent temporary quarters for the Printer & premises for Printing Office — please report what has been done.
2. — Also report progress as regards new Printing Office.'

(Initialled) W.E.M.

27-2-90

In fact, the Superintendent had not been idle. He had approached the heads of several European companies asking if they had a house for rent; he met with the same answer from all of them: 'Sorry, Dear Sir, but we are so short of accommodation for our own people that we've already got couples doubling-up!' If the Russells had been only husband and wife, they might have been able to share a government house with another couple. But with five children! There would have been unthinkable strife.

There were about thirty government houses in Kuala Lumpur, many being shared by bachelors or by married men whose families remained in England. As a last resort, the Superintendent decided to make a physical survey of all the married quarters; it had been more than a month since the previous check had been made. To his immense gratification, he eventually came upon an old wooden bungalow which appeared to be unoccupied. Rapid inquiries revealed that, until recently, this dwelling had housed the European prison gaoler and his family: an official who had lately left Selangor, and whose replacement had not yet been appointed. Much relieved, the Superintendent now asked the British contractors who were building the Printing Office to hurry up the work — if possible to complete it in a shorter time than that

allowed in their contract. They promised to do their best. With some satisfaction, the Superintendent reported personally to the British Resident. Maxwell wrote another minute, this time to the Superintendent of Prisons:

'Can you let me have the Gaoler's quarters for the Printer for a few months? He is a married man with 5 children.'

(Initialled) W.E.M.

10-3-90

The reply was a swift 'Yes' and in this way, the problem of the Russell's accommodation in Kuala Lumpur was solved only four days before their arrival in Singapore.

Under normal circumstances, *S.S. Glengarry* might have stopped at either Bombay or Colombo on its way to Singapore, if only for fresh supplies. On this voyage, however, Captain Webster was evidently anxious to make up for the days which had been lost over the collision with the schooner before they left London. Two weeks after they sailed from Suez, the Captain's announcement that they were now entering the Bay of Bengal was doubtless greeted with sighs of relief by the passengers. They were now within a few days of their arrival in Singapore.

On 15th March, land was sighted to the east. This was the northern tip of Sumatra in Indonesia, and in the evening of that day, *S.S. Glengarry* entered the Straits of Malacca, when the darkening mountains of North Malaya could be seen on the port side. Singapore passengers were told that they could disembark next morning, after the ship had anchored in the harbour. There was much excitement that night before the children were tucked into their berths.

Before the following dawn, the Russell family, with several other curious passengers would have met in the saloon to see the approach to Singapore. A darker mass could be seen on the port side — part of Singapore Island. Other islands could gradually be discerned to starboard as they headed due east towards the rising light. The ship was now steaming slowly, parallel to Singapore's shoreline. The eager eyes in the saloon scanned the coast for signs of civilization or human activity. They saw nothing to show that they were approaching a major port.

Within a few minutes, the landscape was changed from black and white to glorious colour. As the sun rose behind fleecy white clouds in an otherwise blue sky, the shadows of night were immediately absorbed into the brillant tropical daylight, and the spectators were transported into a new scene of great natural beauty. They were now steaming cautiously in a narrow channel between Singapore and an adjacent island. On both sides, tropical vegetation grew in profusion down to the sparse shoreline.

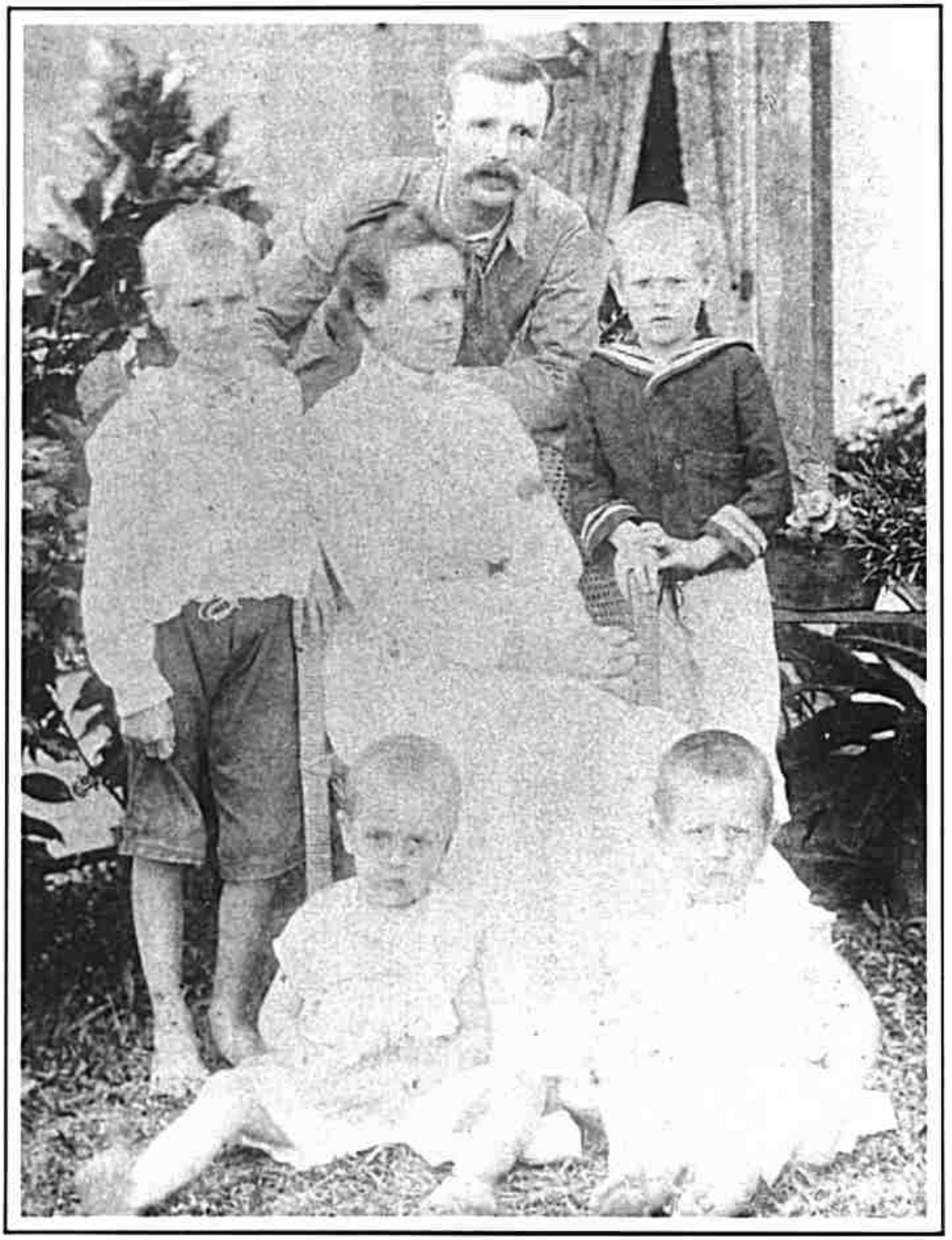
Quite suddenly, the watchers became aware of buildings on the Singapore coast, and they saw that they were passing docks, quays, and warehouses. These docks were not particularly extensive, certainly not as commodious as might have been expected of an international port, and they were also unusual in other respects. They appeared to be remote from any large township: in fact, apart from a busy road leading eastwards, the low hills to the north and west seemed largely unpopulated. Another remarkable feature of these docks was their evident cleanliness. Unlike similar installations elsewhere, the warehouses, offices, guard posts and stables all were manifestly newly whitewashed or painted. Even the sea-water in the main channel was fast-moving and clean. There was a further fact about these facilities which could not have escaped the most cursory observation: the docks and quays were filled to capacity with shipping, and were alive with activity. Their Glen Line ship passed within a hundred yards of the quays where vessels of all descriptions were loading and unloading, and to newcomers among the observers, the sheer speed of working was astonishing. Supervised by a handful of white-suited Europeans and Orientals, the labourers — light-skinned and dark-skinned — went about their tasks with a rapidity and apparent willingness which would have been envied by many western ports. It was, however, obvious that there was no hope of an immediate berth for *S.S. Glengarry* alongside any of the quays, and passengers had already been told that their ship would anchor in the harbour.

A short distance beyond the docks, passengers noticed a small headland on Singapore Island which caused their ship to turn slightly to starboard. An amazing sight now met their eyes. Directly in front of them, a wide expanse of water glittered in the sunlight: a harbour which appeared to contain an astonishing review of the world's current shipping. Steamships, including battleships of the Royal Navy, large cargo carriers, and paddle-steamers, lay anchored closely beside sailing vessels of every type, from three-masted barques and schooners to Chinese junks and smaller craft. Many of the ships were flying British flags, and the whole scene might have been transferred from Spithead on a summer's day — except for the presence of Chinese junks and Arab dhows. With unerring skill, Captain Webster manoeuvred his ship through the limited sea-way between other craft, and eventually anchored some three hundred yards from the shore. His passengers now got their first sight of Singapore town, the capital of the Straits Settlements.

In the brillant morning sunlight, Singapore resembled a Venetian landscape by Canaletto: hills, trees, houses and carriages stood out in crisp detail. No smoke or fog obscured the quiet beauty of the scene. The settlement was obviously divided by a prominent river which flowed into the harbour. To the west of this river, in the direction of the docks, stood a row of imposing office buildings, beyond which lay a mass of red Chinese roofs. On the eastern side of the river, the buildings were well-spaced and elegant, many having large gardens. Several buildings near the sea front were graced with attractive pillars. A road lay close to the narrow shore. The width of this carriage way could be judged by the two-way traffic of open landaus, hansom cabs and tradesmen's wagons, which could be seen moving briskly along its length. A church with a steeple, such as might be found in any English town, stood adjoining this highway. Beyond the town, the island appeared to consist of low hills, on some of which the land was densely covered with trees and

shrubs. Others bore signs of cultivation. In general, however, the island seemed more developed than John and Frances had expected. They probably felt as if they were about to land in an attractive coastal resort — in high summer.

A few minutes after the *Glengarry* had anchored, a steam launch sped from the shore and drew up alongside their ship. Shortly afterwards the chief steward informed the Russells and other passengers that a boat from the Harbour Master's office was waiting to take them ashore.



Destination

7

Escorted by a polite young man from the Colonial Secretary's office, the Russell family disembarked from the *Glengarry* to be ushered into a narrow cabin on the Harbour Master's launch. Although the sun was not far above the horizon, it is likely that the heat inside this confined space was intense, relieved only when the launch drew away from the ship, creating a slight breeze as it headed for the shore.

Landing on the eastern bank of the river which they had seen from the ship, they would be installed in a 'gharry' — a hackney carriage of Indian style — to take them to their temporary accommodation, their hand luggage on the roof. This oven-like vehicle, although it had open windows, quickly reduced its passengers to a state of sodden perspiration.

The colonial government's methods of dealing with newly arrived officials were already well-established. Single men were taken straight to a government mess for bachelors. Families, on arrival, were either accommodated in government quarters, if available, or else they were placed in a suitable boarding-house, as were families in transit to the Malay States.

In 1890 it would have been unthinkable for officers of widely different status to occupy the same boarding-house. Senior officers and their families were never accommodated with juniors: therefore the boarding-houses were selected according to the housing allowances authorized for different grades of staff. Because John Russell held a fairly senior appointment, he and his family were escorted to a most pleasant house named Barganny Lodge, in Eber Road, a quiet by-way not far from Orchard Road, one of the town's main thoroughfares.

Barganny Lodge was competently managed by a woman named Mrs. Basagoili, whose husband was a musician. The house stood in its own grounds and contained a number of fine rooms. Each bedroom had a spacious adjoining bathroom with hot and cold piped water, a bath and a shower. Gas-lights were fitted throughout the house. A special table was probably set aside for the Russell family in the airy dining-room, which led directly into the well-tended garden of tropical plants and flowers. It is possible that an early family photograph was taken in these grounds.

John with Frances and 4 sons, excluding George, taken shortly after arrival in either Singapore or Kuala Lumpur. Left of Frances is Philip, to her right Arthur, and in front are Robert (left) and Donald.

Before leaving, the young government officer would have told them that arrangements had been made for their heavy luggage from the *Glengarry* to be delivered that evening. He would also have informed John of the time for his appointment with the Colonial Secretary next day, and intimated deferentially that John should wear his white colonial uniform for the interview.

Shortly after the young man's departure, and after they had bathed and changed into their lightest and coolest clothes, the Russells were no doubt

offered a late breakfast, and introduced to some of the eating habits of Europeans in Singapore.

Breakfast would prove to be a substantial meal. Beginning with fruit juices, the menu embraced a choice of grape-fruit, water-melon, papaya or bananas. Porridge was also available if requested. There followed an impressive variety of fish and shell-fish dishes, including crabs, prawns and cray-fish. Next came a selection of eggs to order: fried, with ham, bacon or sausages; poached or scrambled on toast; boiled; or omelettes with a wide choice of contents. More solid fare would then be offered: beef, mutton, chicken and game, with suitable accompanying vegetables and sauces. Puddings and sweets concluded the meal. Throughout this considerable repast, participants had a choice of tea or coffee, claret, burgundy or brandy. Before rising from the table, Mrs Basagoili's guests were informed that hot chocolate and biscuits would be served at mid-morning, and that luncheon was from 12.30 to 2 o'clock.

The Russells learned that breakfast and dinner were normally the most important meals of the day. Apart from Sundays and business gatherings, the midday meal tended to be lighter in quantity, being consumed when the temperature was at its height.

After their first meal at Barganny Lodge, when Frances returned to their rooms, she would be pleased to find that all their hand luggage had been carefully unpacked: clean clothes hung in wardrobes, or neatly arranged in drawers. Clothes for washing or pressing had been removed, and the empty cases put into the garden for airing. They were to experience many other instances of efficient and unobtrusive service.

Having been limited to the same restricted choice of garments for almost five weeks, the Russells were no doubt relieved when their heavy baggage was safely delivered on the evening of their arrival. Most of the trunks and boxes contained household effects, and these would be at once deposited in Mrs Basagoili's secure store-room. Trunks containing clothes, however, were probably raided for welcome additions to their wardrobes.

John's white suit, or uniform, was handed over for pressing in readiness for his interview with the Colonial Secretary on the following day. This 'uniform' consisted of a single-breasted suit with a high collar, white socks, and black boots. No doubt his boots were brought to a high polish by the Lodge's efficient servants.

At that time it was usual for the English newspapers to publish the names of Europeans arriving in the colony, and on 17th March 1890, the Straits Times printed the following notice:

'Passengers Outward
Per Glen Line steamer 'Glengarry',
from London, Feb. 12. Mr. and Mrs.
Russell and family . . .'

On the same day — 17th March — John and his younger colleague were driven to the handsome government offices in Empress Place for John to report his arrival, formally, to the Colonial Secretary.

After a brief conversation, the Colonial Secretary probably suggested that John should be taken to visit Messrs Fraser and Neave's printing press, which currently handled all the printing for the Straits Settlements' Government.

Whilst visiting the Government Offices, John could hardly help noticing that the building was being newly painted, both inside and out, and all wooden fittings — doors, staircases, banisters and cabinets — were being freshly stained and varnished. On their way to the printers, his companion would have told him that the renovations were being made in honour of His Royal Highness, Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, who was expected to visit Singapore later that month.

Prince Arthur, handsome and charming, was reputed to be Queen Victoria's favourite son. He had been trained as a professional soldier, and the ostensible reason for his forthcoming tour of the Far East was to 'inspect fortifications'. Visits by members of the Royal Family were inevitably rare, and elaborate preparations were being made for his reception in Singapore, even though his stay in the island was not expected to exceed one full day and a night. John also learned that several Malay Rulers would be coming to Singapore to pay homage to the Prince, including the Sultan of Selangor, who would be making his first visit to the island.

Unfortunately, however, the Russells would miss the Prince's visit: they were scheduled to leave the island on 22nd March, while the Royal party would not arrive until the 25th. Despite his regret, John's immediate concern was his professional future, and he was eager to study the methods used by Fraser and Neave in solving the local printing problems.

He remembered that the first *Gazettes* of the Straits Settlements were printed by the Mission Press in Singapore, and he was interested in the subsequent history of their printing. John learned that the original Mission Press had been owned by a family named Keasberry, and that it was later sold to Messrs. Fraser and Neave.

Fraser had once been a banker: a useful background for his financial acumen. In 1883, Fraser and his partner Neave had founded a successful aerated water company, and they had since expanded into other profitable ventures, including printing.

John was probably slightly apprehensive that Fraser and Neave would regret losing the custom of the Selangor Government in printing its items for the *Gazettes.* He was no doubt relieved to find to on the contrary. It was explained that it had always been difficult to make last minute changes when the principals — the Selangor British Resident and his staff — were so far away. Time was wasted over minor corrections and, there had been dissatisfaction on both sides. As John would appreciate, there was nothing worse than separate slips of corrigenda to be hand-pasted into every copy. It was also extremely unprofitable!

Business-like, competent and enthusiastic, the partners possessed local expertise which earned John's respect. John would have been given a knowledgeable review of the local printing industry, and of the difficulties in

maintaining quality. He was also given a tour of the print-shop, being introduced to the Asian supervisors of each section. He was probably mildly surprised to see that a high percentage of the workers were Malays and Indians, rather than Chinese. If the 'Christian mission' aspect of the business had ever been reflected in the staff, this was evidently no longer the case: most of the employees were Muslims, Hindus or Buddhists.

Apart from their work for the Government, Fraser and Neave also printed a wide range of other items: law books, pamphlets, programmes, menus, concert and theatre tickets, letter-headings, receipt books, invoices, diaries and calendars, in fact all the general printing required by an expanding European community. The printing machines were up-to-date, and examples of the company's finished work were impressive. John's visit evidently ended on a most friendly note, with both the partners offering to give him all possible help in the difficult task of starting from scratch in Selangor.

On their way back to Barganny Lodge, it is probable that John and his companion went through Commercial Square, the business centre of Singapore. Late in the morning, the square would have been filled with carriages waiting to take their masters home for the lunch-time break. Many of these vehicles, and their horses, were of a standard to rival those to be seen in the City of London. Fine and well-groomed animals, stood between the shafts of vehicles from the hands of famous English carriage-makers. The most elaborate examples had uniformed attendants, and John was probably surprised to see that the seats in some of the carriages had pure white cotton covers — a refinement which would have been quite impractical in the murky atmosphere of London.

Splendid buildings, three and even four storeys high, graced the square, many with classical entrances adorned by elegant commissionaires. The Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China occupied a prominent position, while other buildings housed lawyers and merchants.

John was told that originally a small hill had stood on the site of the present square. During the 1860s, however, the earth from the hill had been removed to reclaim land on the sea front. This work had been done by prisoners from India, under the direction of Captain Collyer of the Madras Engineers. They had constructed a stout sea wall and a wide esplanade, known as Collyer Quay, and this was graced by the line of impressive office buildings which John had seen from the ship.

John learned that Indian prisoners had similarly been used in the rebuilding of St. Andrew's Cathedral, the church which he had seen east of the river. This replaced an earlier wooden structure which had been erected about the time of Raffles. The new building was completed in 1862.

Mention of the cathedral reminded John of all he had read about another Singapore building: the elaborate Government House built by Sir Harry Ord after he became Governor in 1867, and which had led to such bitter accusations of extravagance. He would learn that it was difficult for anyone to see that building without an invitation. Apparently, the house stood in several acres of its own grounds, the boundaries of which were protected by fencing

and regularly patrolled by armed guards. Government House could, however, be seen from high ground further inland, although expeditions to the interior of the island were discouraged because of the danger from tigers. It probably seemed extraordinary to John that people should be in mortal fear of wild beasts, so close to apparent civilization.

During these first days in Singapore, the Russells found much to interest them, apart from becoming acclimatized in considerable comfort. John paid further visits to Fraser and Neave's printing works, and no doubt studied Government General Orders, which governed the lives of colonial officers, besides reading recent *Gazettes*. It is likely that he also read the *Singapore Free Press* and the *Straits Times* newspapers every day. Apart from these light occupations, he would have spent many hours sightseeing with the family.

The ever-changing shipping in Singapore's harbour was a source of endless delight to children, including the Russell boys. British and European battleships, passenger and cargo vessels, Chinese junks, Malay boats, and Arab dhows, all contributed to the colourful kaleidoscope. The older boys would have delighted in walking to the sea front with their father, visiting the botanic gardens or watching the fascinating games of various races. They might even — as a special treat — have been taken to the MacRitchie Reservoir, one of the scenic beauty spots of the island.

In Barganny Lodge, a feeling of mutual regard was developing between Frances and their landlady, Mrs Basagoili, who introduced her to the life of a housewife in Singapore. Frances no doubt discovered that the business of housekeeping in the island had been simplified: tradesmen came to the house each morning, taking orders and delivering goods. Groceries, meat, fish, vegetables, newspapers, and sundry goods of all kinds were brought to the door. Other services could be summoned at short notice: hairdressers, barbers, chiropodists, manicurists, tailors, shoe-repairers, knife-grinders, plumbers, joiners, fortune-tellers, language teachers, photographers, and even conjurors. With all these services readily available in one's home, there seemed no good reason for housewives to go shopping. None the less, Mrs. Basagoli and her friends visited the town fairly frequently: to see newly advertised products, and for the pleasure of meeting kindred spirits at coffee parties . . .

On Thursday, 20th March 1890, the Singapore newspapers carried reports of the arrival on the island of His Highness, the Sultan of Selangor. The Sultan, who was accompanied by several members of the Selangor Royal family and an escort of military police, had sailed from Port Klang on Tuesday, 18th March, and had landed in Singapore the next day. The Sultan's party had travelled on the steamship *Sappho*, the same ship on which the Russells were to sail to Klang on Saturday, 22nd March.

The purpose of the Sultan's trip was, to pay his respects to Prince Arthur, who was not due to arrive until 25th March. As this was his first visit to Singapore, he had evidently decided to have a few days of sightseeing before the Prince's arrival. In accordance with protocol, the Sultan first paid official calls upon the Governor and the Colonial Secretary, and received their visits in return. Probably at the Sultan's own request, no public events had been organized in his honour, and it is unlikely that the Russell family would have

had any opportunity of seeing His Highness before preparing for their own departure at the week-end.

The Russells' appreciation of their stay in Singapore was no doubt heightened by the knowledge that their accommodation in Barganny Lodge was at government expense: it was part of their 'passage' to Selangor. The *Sappho* made only a weekly voyage each way, and they had missed the last sailing. However, much as John had enjoyed his stay, he would have been eager to begin his new career in Kuala Lumpur. Frances too was probably feeling somewhat dissatisfied without a house of her own. It would, therefore, have been with a mixture of relief and regret that, on the morning of 22nd March 1890, the Russells said good-bye to Mrs. Basagoili, and were escorted to the docks. They would now have been transported in two carriages, one being mostly filled with luggage. The young man from the Colonial Secretary's office came with them.

Across a bridge over the Singapore River, the road led directly westward into the Chinese part of the town. Rapid progress was impossible in these congested thoroughfares, flanked on both sides by two-storey shop-houses with banners and signs in Chinese characters. Hawkers, rickshaws, pedestrians of all ages, food-stalls, scavenging dogs, and the incessant clamour of an Oriental community surrounded the travellers. This was Chinatown, an area of Singapore which enjoyed an almost independent existence. The contrast between these teeming tenements and the spacious dwellings east of the river was startling. Yet there was no indication of what in England would be regarded as slum conditions: the cheek-by-jowl buildings appeared to be in good order, many being newly painted. Nor was there any evidence of unemployment, or an atmosphere of depression. On the contrary, despite the heat, everyone moved purposefully and energetically, each intent upon his own business. The personal cleanliness of the people was also evident: every street was festooned with long poles of washing, which protuded from upper windows and met above the traffic. Even the most lowly inhabitants were wearing clean clothes to begin the day.

Emerging from these crowded streets, the road passed more evidence of Chinese industry: saw-mills, brick-fields, wheel-wrights, metal foundries and the yards of coffin-makers and stone-masons. The Russells realized that they were now on the road which they had seen from the *Glengarry*: a road which they shared with other carriages, bullock carts, rickshaws, and pedestrians. This busy highway soon traversed an extensive area of swampy ground, from which it had obviously been recovered, and which no doubt accounted for the isolation of the docks themselves.

Eventually, having passed a veritable forest of tall masts and funnels, the Russells' carriages came to rest at the most westerly quay. Here, they had their first sight of the ship which was to carry them on the final stage of their journey to Selangor.

S.S. *Sappho* was not a pretty sight. She lay hard against the stone quay: a small, black-funnelled steamer. Apart from her masts, little else was visible, because she was swarming with multi-coloured, multi-tongued, human beings — all shouting at the same time. However, it was not only humanity which

obscured her superstructure: household equipment, including furniture and personal luggage, together with crates of live poultry, were stacked high on every available inch of deck space. A crowded gangway somewhere amidships linked the people already on board with others on the quay: youths could, however, be seen leaping directly from ship to shore. Although she had been built only two years previously, it was difficult to believe that the unfortunate *Sappho* had ever been shipshape.

As he stepped from their carriage on to the quay, John Russell must have doubted if he could ever get his family on to this uninviting and apparently overcrowded vessel. Their young escort, however, was soon able to clear a way through the crowd, and the Russells were welcomed on board by Captain Wahl, who also supervised the loading of their luggage.

The voyage to Klang took approximately twenty-four hours, and although the Russells would have been accommodated in the ship's main cabin, amenities for passengers were extremely primitive. Most of the Chinese, Malay and Indian passengers shared the deck with the cages of live-stock, and despite the use of canvas awnings, the day-time heat was severe. The scorching climate, combined with an almost total lack of privacy, made conditions for female passengers particularly trying. For a nursing mother such as Frances it was probably an unpleasant experience.

After a long and wretched day spent in clothes damp with perspiration, the Russells may have hoped that the night hours would bring some respite. In the event, as soon as darkness fell, it seemed that every kind of tropical insect was aboard the *Sappho*. The lights in the cabin attracted myriad moths, flies, and beetles. More menacing were the mosquitoes which could be heard buzzing in the semi-darkness, and which were soon inflicting painful bites.

Characteristically, John Russell probably resigned himself to a sleepless night, occasionally taking the baby into his arms, deliberately keeping watch. Sometime during this long night, the ship sailed passed the flickering lights of a town which lay to starboard. These were the lamps of Malacca, showing that they were already more than half-way to Port Klang.

Eventually the sky brightened, and soon the outline of the Malayan coast became visible. Soon after dawn, John learnt that they were now entering the Klang Strait, at the mouth of the Klang River.

The *Sappho* steamed slowly through a channel between mangrove-edged islands, occasionally passing fishermen in canoes. Passengers gathered towards the bow to get their first sight of Port Klang, the gateway to Selangor. Eventually, a close-knit group of wooden huts emerged — a settlement which might, at first glance, have easily been mistaken for a small fishing village. As the *Sappho* drew nearer, however, a large white building set on rising ground appeared through the morning mist. Captain Wahl confirmed that this was 'The Fort', which had been the headquarters of Bloomfield Douglas, the second British Resident of Selangor. John Russell no doubt remembered Isabella Bird's scathing remarks about Klang while staying in that building as the Resident's guest. It certainly seemed that not much had changed in the eleven years since her visit.

Probably to John's surprise, instead of approaching the Klang landing-stage, which was clearly visible, the Sappho headed towards the opposite, or north, bank of the river. Captain Wahl explained that, for want of a railway bridge, the trains had never been able to reach Port Klang on the south bank. Apparently, a railway bridge was then under construction further up-stream, and was expected to be completed during the next few weeks. The railway line would then be brought into the centre of Klang.

After skilful manoeuvring in the river's current, Captain Wahl brought the *Sappho* gently alongside a wooden pier which ran parallel to the station. It is likely that the Russells waited on board until the other passengers and their livestock had disembarked, when John said farewell to the Captain, and helped his family ashore. They found a board near the entrance to the wooden station: 'Bukit Kuda — Selangor Railway'. They would learn that 'Bukit Kuda' meant 'Hill of the Horse', a minor feature of the near-by landscape, and an old name for the surrounding district which the railway had adopted.

When they reached the small ticket office, John would have handed over a voucher for reservations on this last stage of their journey. They would then have been ushered on to the station platform, followed by a small gang of coolies carrying their luggage.

Dishevelled and weary, after twenty-four hours at sea, John and Frances probably had their spirits restored by the sight of the train which awaited them: a train which had obviously been transported from England, and yet was different from any other train they had seen. They would have been entranced by the gleaming paintwork, the cleanliness of the carriages, and the politeness of the uniformed staff. The engine was obviously new, bearing the name-plate of a renowned British manufacturer. Every brass and copper fitting sparkled in the sunlight, and the entire locomotive displayed skilful care. It was manned by a driver and a fireman — both British. The Russells would find that a private compartment had been reserved for them.

Promptly at nine o'clock, with the wave of a green flag and the blowing of the station master's whistle, the morning train began its journey to Kuala Lumpur. Almost from the moment that the carriages glided away from the platform, the Russells would feel the welcome effects of cool air through the open windows. At first, the railway line ran almost due east, never far from the river's bank. The train had scarcely attained its maximum speed when suddenly, through a break in the trees, the enormous bulk of the new railway bridge came into view.

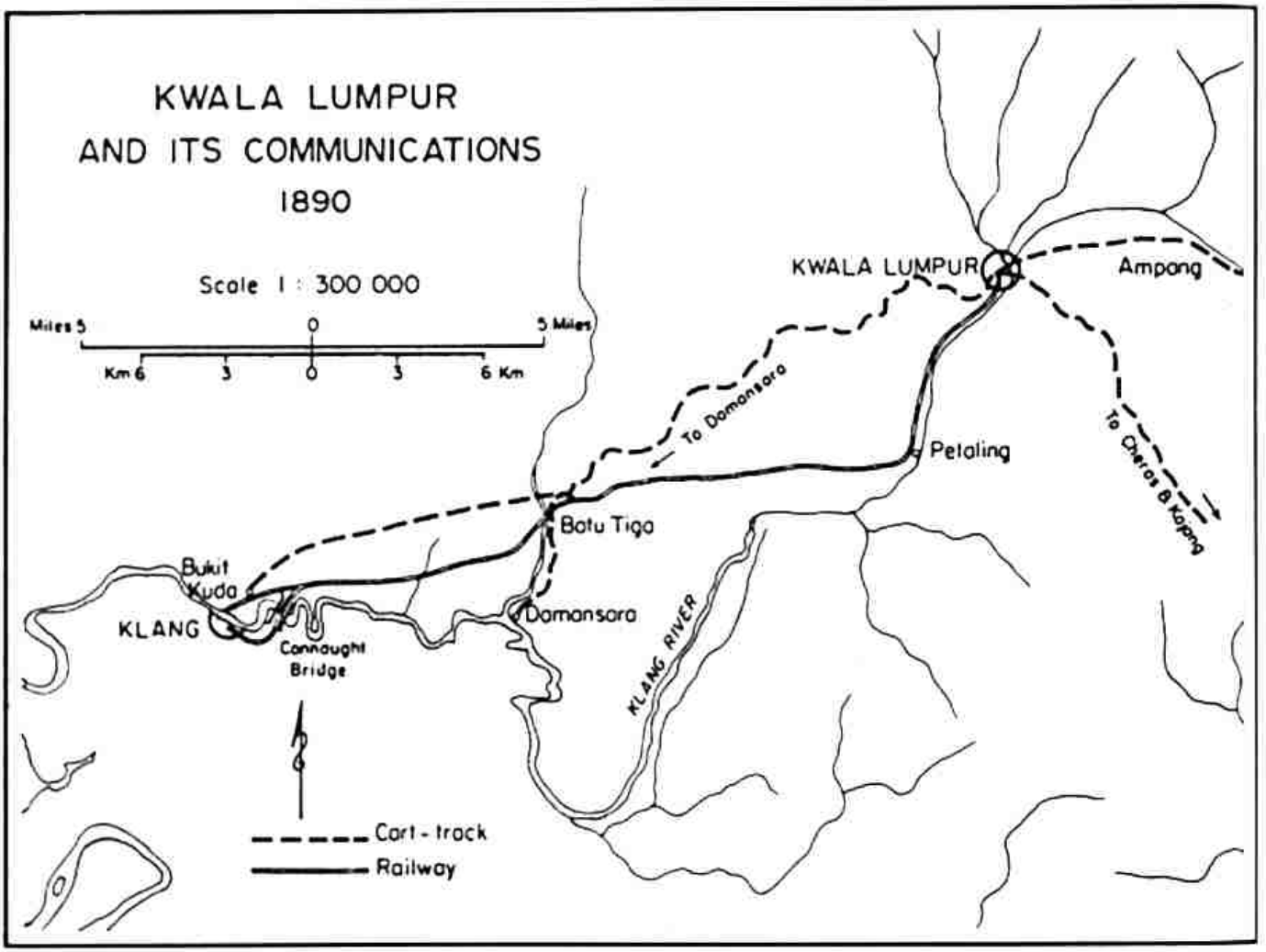
This splendid bridge would have been admired anywhere, but the existence of such a feat of modern engineering in this palpably primitive setting seemed like a miracle. It was difficult to reconcile the sophistication of this achievement with nearby wooden ploughs and axe-hewn boats. Each of the bridge's five spans rose to a height of eighty feet and were strung like the humps of some benevolent serpent over the river. As the Russells' train sped past, a gang of painters could be seen putting a final coat of gun-metal grey on the huge girders in preparation for the ceremonial opening.

After the bridge, the river veered south away from them and soon they were rolling through immaculate coffee plantations. Occasionally, they would catch

a glimpse of an isolated planter's bungalow, raised from the ground on low stilts, and set in a generous garden of brilliant blossoms. Beyond the plantations, and stretching away to distant hills, the land appeared to be largely uncultivated jungle. The few villages which they passed were almost hidden among well-tended orchards of fruit trees, with bullock carts lumbering on their single streets. Half an hour after leaving Bukit Kuda, the train slowed down, eventually stopping at a village with a signboard reading 'Batu Tiga'. Although this was clearly a road junction of some kind there was no covered station, merely a length of open platform with hawkers selling fruit drinks and coco-nut milk. The train guard probably explained that this village marked the point where the railway line met the old road between Kuala Lumpur and the settlement of Damansara on the river. 'Batu Tiga' meant 'Third Mile'; the junction being three miles from Damansara. Steam launches could come up-stream as far as Damansara, which was fifteen miles below Kuala Lumpur, and it was often convenient to transfer cargoes to the railway. The train, however, was soon on its way again.

After traversing more estates and orchards, the passengers began to notice signs of a new activity in the country-side: tin mining. John Russell had been under the impression that tin mining was confined to an area east of Kuala Lumpur, but evidence of fairly wide-spread surface mining now appeared amidst the greenery, and, twenty minutes out of Batu Tiga, the train stopped briefly at another open platform: 'Petaling Halt'. Several covered wagons stood on an adjacent siding, and John would be told that these contained tin ore which would be taken to Bukit Kuda by the next 'down' train.

From Petaling, the railway line ran parallel to the Klang river for the remaining few miles into Kuala Lumpur. After slowing down as it reached the outskirts of the town, the train came to a gentle halt beneath the roof of another wooden station. Including the two short stops, the trip from Bukit Kuda had lasted just over an hour. The Russells had reached the end of their long journey — scarcely knowing what to expect.


KWALA LUMPUR
AND ITS COMMUNICATIONS
1890
Scale 1 : 300 000
Miles 5
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6 Km
KWALA LUMPUR
Ampang
To Damansara
Petaling
To Cheras & Kajang
Batu Tiga
Bukit Kuda
KLANG
Connaught Bridge
Damansara
KLANG RIVER
Cart - track
Railway

Assimilation

8

Other passengers, complete with live-stock, probably evacuated the railway station as rapidly as they had left the *Sappho*, leaving an almost deserted platform behind them. Shortly afterwards, however, the Russells would have been greeted by an officer from the Public Works Department who had been detailed to conduct them to their newly assigned quarters.

From the side of the roughly surfaced road outside the station, the family had their first sight of Kuala Lumpur. The settlement lay in a wide valley surrounded by low hills, with distant mountains visible to north, south and east. To their left, or south, was open country, while to the right, but across the Klang River, lay the most populous area of the town. They watched as the majority of their erstwhile fellow passengers disappeared over a bridge leading to the busiest streets.

On the station side of the bridge lay a fairly large area of open ground, backed by hills to west and south which were dotted with European-style buildings. Across the road, almost directly in front of the station, were the trees and gardens of what appeared to be private houses, and the Russells were told that their house was one of these, within a short distance from the station.

Their guide no doubt arranged for a bullock cart to transport the family luggage, and suggested that while Frances and the baby should travel in a gharry, the rest of the party might go on foot.

Two or three hackney carriages stood at the station's entrance, but they bore little resemblance to the well-turned-out vehicles they had seen in Singapore. These gharries seemed to be not merely ancient but barely safe. They were also extremely dirty. Worse, the horses were thin, unkempt, and obviously on their last legs. There being no choice as to quality, their P.W.D. companion probably hailed the first carriage in the small queue. He and John then helped Frances to step into this vehicle with the baby.

With this gharry wobbling precariously in front, and the bullock cart trundling behind, the family set off across the road. This being a Sunday morning, there would be no other traffic.

As they walked, John was told that although the house which had been allotted to them was one of the oldest government quarters in Kuala Lumpur, its roof and timbers were sound. Furthermore, unlike many later counterparts, the house had three bedrooms.

John also learned that, during the past few days, the P.W.D. had installed some new furniture, and provisionally re-employed a cook-boy and gardener who had worked for the previous occupants. These two domestics would live in the servants' quarters of the house, if John wished to retain their services.

Map of Klang – Kuala Lumpur Railway 1890

In addition, a reliable *amah* had been told to report later that morning to deal with the washing and housework, and could be employed for full days or half days as required. John was possibly somewhat startled to discover that the family seemed to be already committed to having three servants.

After a short distance, the party reached the driveway of a house, on both sides of which were trees, colourful bougainvillea and flower beds. The house itself appeared almost abruptly, because although it faced directly down the drive, the single-storey building blended unobtrusively with its surroundings. Constructed entirely of timber, the house was raised several feet from the ground on pillars, with steps leading up to a spacious verandah. The thatched roof seemed almost lost among the surrounding trees.

The small procession stopped at the foot of the verandah steps, where John no doubt helped his wife and baby to alight from the gharry. A smiling middle-aged Malay was waiting to greet them: a man introduced as their *kebun*, or gardener. It soon became clear however, that the *kebun's* duties were not confined to gardening. He was, in fact, a general handyman, as he demonstrated by unloading the family's luggage from the bullock cart.

After leaving their topis on a hat-stand at the top of the steps, John and Frances met their 'cook-boy' for the first time. An elderly Chinese, dressed in a spotless white jacket and billowing black trousers, he no doubt offered John a small wad of testimonials from previous European employers. Already aware that this man had been re-employed by the P.W.D. on their behalf, John tactfully waved these aside. The smiling cook now declared that he would make some tea, and hurried away towards the back of the house.

Although details of this particular building are not recorded, it is evident that these early government quarters were based, sensibly, on the design of traditional Malay houses. They were single-storey bungalows, raised from the ground. This allowed an unimpeded circulation of air, protection from wild animals, especially snakes, security against monsoon floods and the avoidance of rising damp.

While the extent of floor area in a Malay house depended on the wealth of the owner, quarters for government officers were usually constructed with wide verandahs on three sides, and, on the principle that hot air rises, roofs were high, with walls culminating in lattice-work to allow the escape of warm air.

The roof itself was thatched with *atap*: nipah palm leaves, which, when laid by an expert, remained water-proof for several years. Unfortunately, these roofs also provided a safe haven for lizards, squirrels, rats, mice, other animals, and innumerable insects. They were also a dangerous fire hazard.

Walls were of heavy matting with generous openings: windows with shutters, but without glass. Directly beneath these windows were louvres which allowed the inflow of air when the shutters were closed. The verandahs were fitted with rolls of fine wooden slats, or 'chicks', which could be lowered against direct sunlight or rain. Next to the front verandah was an inside room, extending the whole width of the house, which could be used as a combined dining-room and study.

Bedrooms, also with walls of matting, led off a central corridor at the end of which was the bathroom. This was at the bottom of a few steep steps, which descended amongst the supporting pillars of the building, and was partitioned to make a secluded space. A hard floor and an open drain were the bathroom's main attributes.

Also at the end of the corridor, but beyond the main building, was a covered passageway leading to a separate wooden hut which contained the kitchen, pantry and servants' quarters. These quarters formed an extension to the kitchen, and were divided into separate rooms; one for each resident servant and his family.

In the garden, within a few feet of the covered passage, was the water-well of the house. At some distance, a tiny wooden shed contained a single Indian-style 'thunder-box', to serve the household.

After a welcome mug of tea on the front verandah, the P.W.D. representative probably invited John and Frances to inspect the building, so that John could sign a receipt for its contents. They soon discovered that P.W.D. furniture was both Spartan and solid.

On the front verandah, a cane settee with two matching chairs and a low table constituted the only furniture, apart from the bentwood hat-stand. The dining-room contained a heavy table, and six equally heavy chairs. A plain sideboard and a simple wooden desk completed the furnishing.

One of the first doors in the corridor opened into the master bedroom. This contained a double-bed with a mosquito net suspended from a four-poster frame. This was fitted with a straw mattress laid on wooden boards. Frances was assured that all the mattresses in the house had been newly filled. Three other items merely emphasized the emptiness of this fairly large room: a dressing-table with drawers and a fixed mirror, a wash-stand equipped with hand-basin, jug and soap dish, and a wall-rack for hanging clothes. The windows in this room overlooked part of the garden at the side of the house — an evergreen prospect.

The two smaller bedrooms each contained two single beds with nets, and a chest of drawers. Both of these rooms also had a garden view, though with somewhat smaller windows.

When the door to the bathroom was opened, Frances was warned to tread warily. She found herself standing at the top of several steep steps leading to a cement floor at ground level. Matting enclosed the room on three sides, while the fourth wall, six feet in height, was open at the top to admit light and air. A false ceiling, higher than the floor of the house, formed a platform intended for storage. The bathroom was bright and clean, and although Frances did not descend the steps, she saw every detail of the room. A tall earthenware jar, vaguely reminiscent of the Arabian Nights, stood in one corner. A tin bath was propped against a wall, and two buckets of water sat together in the middle of the floor: no running water.

Leaving the main building by wooden steps at the end of the corridor, they entered the passage leading to the kitchen. As they passed the water-well, they

were assured that these wells were drilled and maintained by the P.W.D., and that the water was pure. Nevertheless, as a precaution, it was advisable to boil all drinking-water. Apparently, it was part of the *kebun's* job to keep the house supplied with water. In the absence of gas-light, the *kebun* also supervised the domestic oil lamps. The government provided three 'hurricane' lamps: one for each adult, and one for the kitchen. Without skilful maintenance, these lamps constituted an ever-present threat to life and property in wooden houses. A small stone cubicle near the well contained the lamps and their kerosene. The latrine was cleaned every morning by a 'night-soil remover' from the P.W.D.

Although the cement floor of the kitchen was clean, the walls were ingrained with soot. A bench-like structure of stone, with a fire in the centre, dominated the confined space where the cook laboured. The pantry consisted of mostly empty shelves, but contained a well-worn selection of enamelled mugs, plates and inexpensive cutlery.

John and Frances would not have entered the servants' rooms, and were told that they contained no government property. They were, however, introduced to the cook's Chinese wife and children, and to the *kebun's* Malay family. Frances was probably astonished to find whole families living in single, unfurnished, rooms. She was assured that the servants and their families were delighted to live in government quarters, rent free.

When they returned to the verandah, they would find more hot tea for the adults and fresh barley-water for the children — all served in the enamelled mugs from the pantry. They also found a robust and cheerful Chinese *amah*, who offered her services for washing and other housework. She would have been engaged to come every day, for a full day's work. Upon hearing this, she immediately began to help Frances in unpacking the family's possessions from the trunks and boxes.

Leaving Frances to supervise the unpacking, the two men probably adjourned to the dining-room to pore over the immaculately hand-written inventory of the bungalow's contents which John was invited to sign. This document, covering many pages, described each article of furniture and equipment in exact detail, and concluded with the statement that everything had been handed over 'in good condition'. John was not given to wasting time on non-essentials, and he no doubt signed this document in good faith.

After the hand-over was completed, their P.W.D. colleague probably suggested that, as it was Sunday, the family might join him for lunch at the Selangor Club, where he would be pleased to sponsor them for membership. Busily unpacking, and having the baby to feed, it is likely that Frances declined this offer on behalf of herself and the children, but she probably encouraged John to go to the club with their new colleague. The cook also assured them that there would be no difficulty in preparing lunch for the 'mem-sahib' and the children.

John and his companion would then have walked to the club — which was less than half a mile away from their house. On the way, John would have been given some idea of the club and its history. The Selangor Club was then

only six years old, having been established in 1884. From the beginning it had been a quasi-government project, designed to provide a recreational centre for the growing European population, a large portion of whom were government officers. Demonstrating the government's interest, from its earliest years the Presidency of the club had alternated between the Deputy British Resident, and the British Resident himself.

The first clubhouse was no more than a small atap-roofed hut on the north side of the open space known as the Parade Ground. A stable for members' horses was constructed nearby. The hut contained a library, or reading-room, and facilities for eating and drinking. It was intended as a social and cricket club. In June 1885, after a loan of $900 had been obtained from members, a pavilion was added for the benefit of cricket enthusiasts.

In 1889, the Selangor Club committee decided to build a new clubhouse, to cater for the greatly increased membership. Accordingly, in June of that year a loan of $4,000, bearing interest at 10%, was raised from members. The Government contributed a further $3,000.

The new clubhouse, which John and his companion were now approaching, had been built on the west side of the Parade Ground, commanding an excellent view of the most developed part of the ground. The building had been designed by Mr A.C. Norman, the P.W.D.'s leading architect, and a founder member of the club. It was a two-storeyed wooden building on stone foundations. Downstairs, its amenities consisted of a bar, and rooms for dining and billiards. Upstairs, a single large room, equipped with a piano, was used for dancing and concerts.

In 1890, the Europeans in Selangor numbered approximately 150 adults, about one third being females. For their recreation, there was no professional theatre nor musicians, no hotels nor public bars. In the circumstances, members of this community created their own entertainments — subject, of course, to official approval. By fulfilling the need for a convenient meeting place, the Selangor Club became recognized as the social and sporting centre of the state.

For the first five years of its existence, unpaid volunteers served as the club secretaries. However, in October, 1889, as the membership continued to grow, it was decided to employ a full-time secretary, and an applicant, Count Bernsdorff, was appointed on a salary of $100 per month.

During this walk to the club the peaceful air was probably shattered by the loud report of a cannon being fired not far behind them. The noise of this explosion was so loud and unexpected that John was momentarily stopped in his tracks. This was the report of a 'time gun' fired from Police Headquarters at five o'clock in the morning, at midday, and again at nine o'clock at night, as a public service for people who could not afford clocks or watches.

When they arrived at the clubhhouse, they would find it full of people, almost all Europeans. Sunday morning was apparently a favourite time for families, including children, to meet. No doubt John was soon introduced to Count Bernsdorff, the secretary, and asked to complete an application form for

himself and his family. As John was a newly arrived government officer, this was largely a formality, and he was told that the Russells could have full use of the club pending formal approval.

This was probably John Russell's first introduction to a social club. Most likely, his knowledge of exclusive London clubs was limited to what he had read of them, and, being a home-loving man, he may never have joined a club of any kind in England. During the next two hours, he would be introduced to many of the members, including government officers, and a few coffee planters and merchants, all of whom no doubt gave him a friendly reception. They were probably somewhat amazed to find that John Russell, although quiet, was more like a middle-weight boxer in prime condition, than a Government Printer whom they had perhaps imagined as pale-faced and puny.

The British Resident's house, known as the Residency, stood at the top of the hill overlooking the town from above the Parade Ground. It was approached by a narrow path leading up from the road behind the Selangor Club. The Residency was a fairly large wooden building, which contained the Resident's living quarters, his office, and spare bedrooms for visitors. It also housed a council chamber for meetings of the State Legislative council.

On the morning after the Russells' arrival in Kuala Lumpur, John, faultlessly attired in his white suit and topi, climbed the steep path to the Residency to meet his new master, the British Resident.

William Edward Maxwell, C.B.E., Her Britannic Majesty's British Resident, Selangor, was a man of average size. Usually dressed in a dark blue uniform jacket with gilt buttons and white trousers, he comported himself more like a commanding general than a civil administrator. His blond hair was thinning, and he wore a monocle in his right eye. This had the effect of greatly enlarging the steely blue eye which lay behind it, giving the face an unbalanced, even fearsome impact. Malays described Maxwell as having 'a tiger's eye'.

Always a serious and conscientious man who did not indulge in small talk, Maxwell probably treated John to a dissertation on the urgent need for an independent *Government Gazette* in Selangor. Shortly after he was appointed Resident he had realized that with the rapid development which he envisaged, it was going to be increasingly awkward to have the *Gazettes* printed in Singapore. He had succeeded in convincing His Excellency the Governor, that Selangor should have its own Printing Office. Advice had then been obtained from Singapore and London, and financial estimates had been approved for machinery and staff in the present year. Maxwell probably produced a document headed: 'Estimates: Government Printing Office, 1890', and the two men would have studied the figures in detail.

Sir William Edward Maxwell CBE - British Resident, Selangor, who conceived the idea of printing the Selangor Government Gazettes in Kuala Lumpur. (By courtesy of J.M. Gullick).

Apparently all the machinery, type and equipment shown in these estimates had already been received: it was now lying in a P.W.D. store. John was no doubt ordered to check these items as soon as possible — preferably that day. On the question of staff, nothing had been done pending John's arrival. He must begin an immediate search for the compositors, machine operators, and

other skilled people mentioned in the estimates. Maxwell, however, offered to give all possible help, and did not conceal his irritation at the laxity of the P.W.D. over the temporary printing office.

Despite some terseness, the British Resident had probably satisfied John Russell in a number of important ways: he was obviously enthusiastic about the new printing venture; he was straightforward; he was interested in detail; and, finally, he was prepared to give John all the backing he would need to make the project a success.

Before descending Residency Hill, John may have paused at the top of the path to admire the breathtaking scenery. Tree-covered mountains overlooked the valley below him on three sides: those in front — to the east — formed the almost impassable boundary between Selangor and Pahang.
To his right, southwards, the mountains marked the border of Sungei Ujong. Left, lay the distant jungle-capped barrier between Selangor and Perak.

At the bottom of the path was the Parade Ground, with the roof of the new clubhouse almost directly beneath him. Beyond this, a line of nondescript wooden buildings, mostly shop-houses, separated the open space from the Klang River. The main part of the town lay on the opposite bank, as did the prominent knoll, or hillock, of Bukit Nanas or 'Pineapple Hill', the site of the original garrison of 1872. As he stood enjoying a light breeze, and this glorious view of an evergreen land, John probably felt refreshed and exhilarated.

Walking from the Residency, he would soon be amongst a neat group of Government offices, some of which were of brick, with tiled roofs. A Union Jack had been raised on a flagstaff outside the largest of these buildings, which proclaimed itself as the 'Government Secretariat'. John would see that a new brick building was being erected nearby, and would be told that this was for the Government Printing Office. He probably met the contractor's representative supervising the workers, from whom he would learn that the office might be ready in about eight weeks, sometime in June 1890.

Having collected the Bills of Lading from P.W.D. headquarters, John would spend the rest of the day checking the sizeable pile of crates addressed to 'HBM's Printing Office, Selangor', which stood in a P.W.D. store. Assisted by a storekeeper, he carefully opened each crate, checking the contents against its Bill of Lading. It is likely that the main printing press, by far the largest piece of machinery in a print-shop, was dismantled and packed into separate boxes. Although he probably had no working drawings of the press, through his experience with similar machines, he could visualize the positioning of the pieces and check its completeness. As soon as the contents of each crate had been identified, it was re-packed and the lid re-fastened.

Apart from the crates there were several boxes of 'type': the metal alloy letters for printing the *Gazettes*. John noticed that the amount of type appeared to be based on the requirements of an extremely small publication. Perhaps Mr Dishman, or one of his staff, noting the number of Selangor items in the *Straits Settlements Gazettes*, had concluded that an independent fortnightly publication in Kuala Lumpur would require only a modest number of pages, and had ordered type accordingly.

'Running out of type' had been a printer's nightmare since Caxton's day, and John was made slightly apprehensive by the very thought. Unfortunately, neither he, nor even the Resident himself, could predict the size of the *Selangor Gazette* during the first months of its existence, and John decided that it would be inappropriate to raise the matter at that stage.

However, John's most pressing problem in these early days was to be the recruiting of staff. In the absence of government schools, the number of local people educated in any language was necessarily limited. Although there were private tutors for Malays, Chinese, and Indians, few of these were able to teach English. Even the clerks in government departments had mostly learnt their English in the service. Unlike Singapore, Kuala Lumpur had no significant Eurasian community, though a handful of people from Malacca could speak some English. Ideally, as John knew, it was desirable that a printer of English should be well acquainted with the language: a number of the earliest printers had also been authors.

After he had obtained the help of the secretariat in sending a suitable circular to all government departments about the new vacancies, and had interviewed a number of business leaders, without result, John realized that neither government offices nor commercial companies were prepared to release their treasured English-language clerks to the new printing office. He could see that the search for staff would have to be extended to Singapore, and Maxwell agreed.

John was also anxious to get the help of Singapore carpenters in furnishing the printing office. Compositors required not only special desks, but also specially designed racks, or cases, to hold loose type. These were wooden trays divided into compartments for different letters, usually in two parts, the 'upper case' for capital letters and the 'lower case' for small letters. Carpenters with previous experience in constructing such items were available only in Singapore.

Just a week after John Russell's arrival in Kuala Lumpur, William Maxwell wrote the following letter to the Colonial Secretary in Singapore:

> *'I have the honour to inform you that I have directed Mr. J. Russell to proceed to Singapore in order that he may visit the Govt. Printing Office and get all necessary information from which to order racks, desks, fittings, etc. necessary for a printing office.'*
>
> *'I have also desired him to select if possible competent persons to fill the offices ennumerated in the Estimates for 1890 under the head of Printing Office: Establishment.'*

He ended by saying that he would be much obliged for any assistance which could be given to John Russell.

John had never made a practice of inflicting his office troubles on Frances, but during their first few days in Kuala Lumpur he had probably mentioned that he might have to make an official trip to Singapore. It therefore would have come as no surprise to her when he said that his passage had been booked on the next sailing of the *Sappho*.

It might have been anticipated that Frances would find Kuala Lumpur strange, and perhaps even frightening, because of the racial multiplicity of its people. Such fears, however, would have been at variance with her natural good humour and adaptability as a true Londoner. In fact, again surrounded by their own possessions, Frances was pleasantly surprised by the comforts of their new home, and she began to appreciate some of the advantages of living in Malaya. The climate was not quite so hot as she had expected, and unaccustomed servants relieved her of most of the household chores she had known in England. Her husband also seemed happy: he had great enthusiasm for his job, and she knew that he was pleased by her own cheerful acceptance of their new circumstances. Furthermore, within a few days of their arrival, Frances had found a workable solution to a problem which had worried them from the beginning of this venture: educating the children.

A neighbour, with school-going children of her own, had recommended a small private school run by a Mrs Hurth, and had accompanied Frances on a visit to the school, not far away. It transpired that Mr F.A. Hurth was a leading coffee planter occupying a substantial house, several rooms of which had been set aside as class-rooms for his wife's pupils. Mrs Hurth was apparently a highly qualified teacher.

All necessary arrangements were made without delay, and the four older children were soon going to school. Classes began at eight o'clock each morning and ended at noon. Groups of different ages were supervised by assistants, and the value of home-work was emphasized. Although the fees were not excessive, for four children, the payments involved many willing sacrifices by Frances and John, who also guided the home-work.

During John's brief absence, Frances was kept fully occupied, and, apart from their school work, she encouraged the boys to learn all they could about Malaya — their new home.

Singapore Interlude

9

Again on board the *Sappho*, though now on a 'single' voucher, John Russell would have been greeted by the ever-genial Captain Wahl, and allotted a special place in the ship's cabin.

Contrasting with the goods carried from Singapore, when the deck had been stacked with livestock and furniture, the ship's cargo now consisted mainly of fruit and vegetables. Baskets of coconuts, mangoes, bananas, watermelons, papayas, durians, pineapples, lychees, mangosteens, and Chinese vegetables of every kind, occupied the deck-space. The passengers were also different: few families of women and children, mostly traders travelling alone.

The voyage from Klang to Singapore began in the evening, when there was usually a light breeze in the Malacca Straits. John probably sat near the wheel-house, smoking a pipe, and occasionally exchanging pleasantries with the Captain. Watching a sunset on the Straits could be most relaxing: the golden orb sank slowly behind the distant hills of Sumatra, leaving a flaming sky in its wake. When darkness eventually came, however, insects were again active, though Frances would have packed a mosquito net to help John to sleep.

Throughout the following day John had no means of escaping the full effect of the heat, and it would have been with relief that he said good-bye to Captain Wahl on the Singapore dock.

Engaging a cab, he was driven straight to Barganny Lodge, welcomed by Mrs. Basagoili, and given a single room with its own bathroom with hot and cold water taps, which he now regarded as the height of luxury.

In common with many other Europeans in Singapore, Mrs. Basagoili appeared to be still under the spell of Prince Arthur's visit, and no doubt she drew John's attention to recent copies of the *Straits Times* and *Singapore Free Press*, both of which carried comprehensive reports of the great event.

Since hearing of the Royal tour, John would have learnt that Prince Arthur had been trained as a professional soldier, and that he was currently Commander-in-Chief of Bombay, where he was stationed with his wife. For their present tour of the Far East, they had embarked from Bombay the twelve-year-old P & O liner *Kaisar-i-Hind* bound for China. Their stay in Singapore had lasted for just over twenty-four hours: arriving on the morning of 25th March, they had re-embarked the following day. Despite its brevity, the royal visit occupied many column inches in the news pages of the local English papers. It was obvious that most conscientious efforts had been made to ensure the accuracy of even the most minute details of the royal visit.

The *Singapore Free Press* began its account early in the morning of 25th March. Since seven o'clock, a distinguished gathering had been waiting at the half-built Johnston's Pier to welcome the Royal visitors.

'There were gathered the heads of the various departments, in regulation frock coats, mostly with resplendent hat and boots, though many turned out with helmets. The front rows were occupied by ladies, the men grouping themselves in the rear. The venerable Abdul Samat, Sultan of Selangor, his breast decorated with the cross of St. Michael and St. George, attended by the Raja Muda and several high officials, with Mr. Syers in gorgeous uniform was next . . .'

John remembered the name of Harry Syers, the ex-soldier who had formed the Selangor police, and who was now its much-respected Superintendent.

'Near by was Tunku Mahmoud of Pahang and Mr Rodgers; on his left sat Syed Mohamed Alsagoff while the Sultan of Perak and his retinue occupied places in this section. A group of Rajas from Sri Menanti, in Royal yellow and quaint head coverings, formed a fitting end to the picture.'

Mr. Rodgers, mentioned as accompanying the Sultan of Pahang, was the British Resident of that state; he had previously spent many years in Selangor. Syed Alsagoff was a member of one of the oldest, richest, and most distinguished families in Singapore. Sri Menanti, cited in the report, was the traditional home of Sungei Ujong's chiefs.

The newspaper account continued:

'H.E. the Governor and Lady Clementi arrived at 7.30, with Captain Massay and the Private Secretary. Captain Craufurd (looking very distingué in his naval uniform) conducted the party to the Albuquerque, *and we in the pavilion settled down to wait again, relieving the monotony of that proceeding by going out to admire the Guard of Honour of magnificent Sikhs down from Perak, who lined up outside looking very soldier-like in their scarlet and blue livery and pennoned lances.'*

'The Guard of Honour on the Pier consisted of two companies of the 58th. in charge of Captain Brown, Lieut. Higginbotham bearing the colours. It formed two lines extending the whole length of the Pier, with the band in the rear.'

'The bright sun on the water made it difficult to see when the Kaisar came into the roads but a gun was fired as she passed St. John's Island, and finally at half past eight, the whistle told those who were waiting that she had anchored.'

'At eighteen minutes to nine the Albuquerque *came alongside the pier and every eye was strained to catch a glimpse of the Royal Party, who were received with the strains of the national anthem, the thunder of the guns at Fort Canning and the salute of the Guard of Honour.'*

His Royal Highness was then introduced to the Chairman of the Municipal Commissioners, Colonel Dunlop, who read a welcoming address. This began with a suitably elaborate introduction:

'To His Royal Highness Prince Arthur William Patrick Albert, Duke of Connaught and of Strathearn, and Earl of Sussex, Prince of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Duke of Saxony, Prince of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, K.G., K.T., K.P., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E.'

'May it please Your Royal Highness.

'We, the Municipal Commissioners, on behalf of the Community of the Town of Singapore, beg to approach Your Royal Highness, and to offer our sincere and heartfelt expressions of welcome, upon this occasion of your visit to Singapore, the Capital of the Straits Settlements, which may fairly rank as one of the most loyal and prosperous of the Crown Colonies.'

'Once a dependency of that great Indian Empire which Your Royal Highness has so recently left, the Straits Settlements have since the date of transfer in 1867, continued to make steady and rapid progress; and Singapore now stands a fitting monument to the foresight of its distinguished founder, and the success of that system of administration which has left its indelible record in the pages of Indian History.'

'We venture to hope that in assuring Your Royal Highness of a cordial welcome to these shores, we may speak not merely for the Community of Singapore and the Straits Settlements, but of the vast Malay Peninsula, of which this is the commercial centre, the Sultans and Rajahs of which evince a deep interest in the Royal Family of England, and who have, moreover, voluntarily placed themselves under the protection of Her Majesty's Throne.'

Colonel Dunlop went on to refer to a visit by the Duke's brother, the Duke of Edinburgh, in 1869, and also a visit by Prince Albert Victor and Prince George in 1881. He referred to the great increase in Singapore's population in recent years, the development of trade and commerce, the town's new streets and buildings and the improvement in defences. Finally, he expressed the loyalty of the town's 'mixed community' to Queen Victoria, and requested the Duke to 'convey these sentiments to the foot of the Throne'.

The Colonel then folded the address and placed it in a silver casket especially made to contain it, before handing it to the Duke who acknowledged its receipt. In a short speech, said to have been 'almost inaudible except to those near him', the Duke congratulated the colony on its prosperity, and referred to the visit of his brother some twenty years before.

It might be thought that Colonel Dunlop's main tribute would have been enough for the most regal occasion, but he then presented the Duke with a further address, this time on behalf of the District Grand Lodge of Freemasonry, Eastern Archipelago, of which the Colonel was currently Grand Master.

The introduction to this second address included the following qualifications immediately after the Duke's other honours:

'Provincial Grand Master of Sussex, Past District Grand Master of Bombay, Past Grand Warden of England, Master of All Scottish Freemasonry in India.'

Although John Russell would have read that Edward, Prince of Wales and heir to the throne, was Grand Master of Freemasonry, he was probably surprised to find the organization so highly rated.

After salutations 'on behalf of the Members resident in the Straits Settlements and the adjoining Protected Native States', Colonel Dunlop stressed the Masons' appreciation of Royal support:

> *'I would also express our most ardent wish that Your Royal Highness may live long to spread the light and lustre which Your Royal Highness' presence and example have secured to our Ancient and Honourable Institution.'*
>
> *'Our prayer is that He by whom Kings govern and Empires prosper may long preserve our Order and shower upon Your Royal Highness His choicest blessings.'*

When this address had been acknowledged, the royal couple were introduced to the various Heads of State and Native Princes before being driven through enthusiastic crowds to Government House.

The coast defences, which the Duke had come to inspect, consisted of a number of gun-sites spread along the south coast of the island. It had been arranged that he would visit several of these, largely manned by European and Eurasian volunteers under regular officers. His Highness' late arrival at Government House led to some curtailment of this plan. However, in mid-morning the Duke re-embarked on the launch *Albuquerque*, and was taken to inspect one of the guns at Pasir Panjang, closely observed by newspaper reporters.

Not far out to sea, a wooden screen was towed past this gun-site as a target for the gunners. Unfortunately, not all the arrangements went according to plan. On disembarking from the launch, one of the Duke's military escorts lost his helmet in the sea, presaging several other irregularities. An initial attempt to fire the gun was foiled when the firing lanyard broke at the crucial moment. Eventually, two shots were fired — both missed by a wide margin. The Duke could see at a glance that the gun was years out of date, and he forgave the inexpert volunteers. There was now no mumbling in his soldierly response. "That's an awful gun you've got!", he declared.

By half-past two in the afternoon the Duke had finished his tour of the fortifications. The Royal party later visited the Botanical Gardens where a flower show had been arranged. The Duke and Duchess were conducted round the gardens by Mr Henry Ridley, the Curator, who was experimenting with various kinds of rubber plants which were ultimately to replace coffee bushes on Malaya's plantations.

The highlight of the day, however, was a Reception at Government House for the leaders of colonial society which was fixed for nine-thirty, after dinner.

Perhaps in deference to his age, the Sultan of Selangor was the first Malay ruler to be presented to the Duke and Duchess, and was invited to share a settee with the Duke. Their subsequent conversation was translated by William Maxwell, specially present for the occasion. Although the reporter of the *Singapore Free Press* was not told the details of these discussions, John Russell learnt from a *Straits Settlements Gazette*, published on 4th April, that the Selangor Sultan had used the opportunity to ask the Duke's permission to

name the new Klang railway bridge The Connaught Bridge in commemoration of His Highness' visit to the Straits of Malacca. In reply, His Royal Highness had said that he accepted the compliment, and gave his consent.

John Russell read further details of the Duke's visit: the costumes at the Reception, the music of the bands, the efficiency of the police, the respectful crowds, and finally, the departure from Johnston's Pier on the morning of 26th March 1890. The newspaper reports contained one detail which no doubt surprised him: this was the fact that Government House was now lit by electricity from its own generator — a development which seemed to project Singapore into the modern world, in contrast with the flickering oil lamps of Kuala Lumpur.

John also learnt that the Governor, Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, had gone on home leave immediately after the Royal visit, and that Sir Frederick Dickson was now the acting Governor.

Despite a circular asking Heads of Departments for the names of any staff who might wish to apply for the new posts in the Selangor Printing Office, John probably had more hope of finding printers among the newspaper fraternity of Singapore, a group which had no counterpart in Selangor. The Singapore newspapers, both vernacular and English, could be likened to a family of fledglings: some flew with difficulty, whilst others fell from the nest. Even the two English dailies, the *Straits Times* and the *Singapore Free Press*, had both gone out of circulation at critical points in their histories.

The best-known owner-editor of the *Straits Times* was John Cameron. However, he was made bankrupt when the premises were destroyed in a fierce fire. Though he eventually recovered and the paper was revived, it was not until after Cameron's death that its circulation began to improve. This followed the appointment in 1887 of a young Scottish journalist named Arnold Reid.

The *Singapore Free Press* had closed down in 1869, after several precarious years of existence. It too had ultimately re-emerged under an efficient new editor, W.G. St. Clair, who had taken over in the same year as Reid joined the *Straits Times*. Another English paper was the *Singapore Eurasian Advocate*, which had begun in 1888 and was still in existence in 1890, although it was reported to be in difficulty at the time of John Russell's visit.

From the wavering fortunes of these ventures, it was apparent that the prospects of permanent employment for local printers were, to say the least, uncertain. From a printer's point of view, there was another disadvantage in working for daily papers: they were invariably printed, either very late at night, or soon after dawn. John probably felt confident that his offer of government employment, with a stable job and little or no night work, would appeal to newspaper printers of all ages and races, married or single.

In the course of his enquiries, John would also have discovered that the editors of local newspapers were more than senior journalists. They usually had a financial interest in the business, and were more like Managing Directors, in charge of every aspect of the newspaper: policy, finance, machinery, premises and staff.

John called on Mr Reid and Mr St. Clair. Both editors evidently proved most helpful, and John was provided with names and addresses of unemployed printers. Some were men who had recovered from either illness or injury and who were again seeking work. Others were from printers who had previously worked for English language newspapers, now defunct. Letters had also been received from boys, straight from school, who were applying for jobs as printers. Similar enquiries at Fraser and Neave's printing office yielded a useful list of potential employees.

As a result of subsequent interviews, John recruited three experienced compositors and two 'pressmen', or machine operators — enough for his initial operations. Others on his list were noted as 'reserves'.

In the course of his almost daily visits to the Secretariat, John would have heard much of the news, rumours and gossip which circulated amongst his government colleagues. It was no doubt through these channels that he learned of the elaborate preparations being made for the official opening of the 'Connaught Bridge'. The Acting Governor would attend, and every effort was to be made to ensure that the occasion would be memorable for all concerned.

Connaught Bridge

10

On his return to Selangor, John found a large number of officials fully engaged on preparations for the bridge opening. Although the event itself would not take place until Thursday, 17th April 1890, festivities in Kuala Lumpur were to begin on the 14th. His Highness the Sultan of Selangor, who had paid his first visit to his capital for the opening of the railway in 1886, was now to make a second trip to the town. Sir Frederick Dickson, Acting Governor, would also make a special journey from Singapore for the occasion. Naturally, John's elder boys were eagerly looking forward to seeing the parades and displays which would be held during the four days of celebrations.

On Monday, 14th April 1890, Sir Frederick and Lady Dickson arrived at Klang on board the government steamer *Sea Belle*, to be received by a salute of gunfire from the fort. They were also welcomed by the British Resident, William Maxwell, the Raja Muda of Selangor, and government officers stationed at Klang. The *Sea Belle* then came alongside the old railway station at Bukit Kuda, and the acting Governor and his party travelled by train to Kuala Lumpur, where the station had been gaily decorated in their honour. They were to be met by a large gathering of citizens, including the principal community leaders, and a detachment of Sikhs of the Selangor Police accompanied by a newly formed band. The Sikhs, in their turbans of yellow and red — the State colours — and full-dress uniforms, provided an element of pageantry to the proceedings.

It is likely that John Russell was one of the government officers ordered to assemble at the station to welcome the Acting Governor. William Maxwell, always fond of ceremonial occasions, had taken pains over arranging the official reception. Before leaving for Klang, he had made a thorough inspection of the stations's decoration, and had checked the turn-out of the Sikhs, and the smartness of the band. He also insisted on stage-managing the community leaders, whom he had requested to line-up on the platform exactly opposite the point at which the Governor's compartment would come to rest. This was probably John's first opportunity to see these prominent men who symbolized the multi-racial character of the town. One of his colleagues gave him some brief details of each of these distinguished citizens.

At the right of the line, in the most senior position, stood a richly attired Malay, Raja Laut, son of a previous Sultan of Selangor. He wore a *baju*, or blouse, of shimmering silk with a full-length matching *sarong*. The finely wrought hilt of a *kris* protruded from the folds of his clothing. He was adorned with a head-dress of traditional Selangor pattern, which added several inches to his shortish stature. Raja Laut carried himself with a natural dignity, and was described as a jealous guardian of the rights and privileges due to someone of his own high birth.

Next in line was another descendant of Selangor Royalty. This was Raja Bot, a grandson of the previous Sultan, whose father had been chief of the Lukut

district originally part of Selangor. However, in 1880 that area had been transferred to Sungei Ujong and Raja Bot had lost his inheritance. His life had been unusual for a Malay aristocrat. As a youth, he had been sent to attend an English school in Malacca by his enlightened father, who had then apprenticed him to a Chinese business to study trading methods. As a result, he was more liberal-minded than many of his peers. John Russell was given an illustration of Raja Bot's lack of prejudice. Apparently, there had been some Malay resistance to vaccination against smallpox. However, during a recent epidemic, the Raja had received voluntary training as a vaccinator, and had worked among the Kuala Lumpur Malays to combat the disease. In lighter vein, he was known to be a keen gambler — a pastime usually associated with the Chinese.

To Raja Bot's left stood the Capitan China, Yap Kwan Seng, the official leader of the Chinese community. Kwan Seng was a clansman of the late Yap Ah Loy, the most renowned Capitan China of Kuala Lumpur, who might truly be called the founder of the settlement. Before the advent of British administration, the Capitan China had been everything from the leading businessman, tin miner and property owner, to judge, police chief and military commander. Yap Ah Loy had died in 1885, by which time the supreme authority of the British Resident had already been established, and many of the Capitan China's powers had been transferred to British officers. Yet, even at the time of John Russell's arrival, the Capitan China occupied a unique position in the Chinese community. He still had the powers of a magistrate in respect of Chinese customs and clan affairs, and he was expected to contribute to good causes from his personal wealth. He was also expected to devote many hours of his time to public committees, the beloved instruments of British government policy. On the present occasion, Yap Kwan Seng represented his people with a quiet dignity. He was dressed in a Mandarin's gown with wide sleeves. His head was covered, somewhat incongruously, by a European *topi* atop his plaited pigtail.

The Chinese man standing next to Yap Kwan Seng seemed to tower over his compatriot. This was Loke Yew, outstandingly tall for a Cantonese and a man of considerable physical strength. His well-trimmed moustache, also unusual for a Chinese, gave his face an almost European aspect. He wore a pair of black silk trousers and a white jacket with a high collar. Though Loke Yew's expression was pleasant and relaxed as he chatted with his neighbours in the line, his frequent reference to a large pocket watch clearly indicated his dislike of being kept waiting — even if it was for an Acting Governor.

Loke Yew had spent his earliest years working on his father's small farm in south China. At the age of thirteen, apparently with the consent of his parents, he made his way to Hongkong, and eventually to Singapore where he had been employed in a Chinese shop. When he had saved ninety-nine dollars, he opened his own shop named Chop Heng Loong, which had become famous in Singapore and in Kuala Lumpur. Now, forty-five years old, Loke Yew had become more than a shopkeeper: he was one of the country's leading tin miners, a prominent land owner and an important public figure. In addition, he had become one of Malaya's richest tax gatherers, or 'tax farmers'. In order to avoid the expenses of tax offices, the British Government had continued the traditional local method of collecting taxes by 'farming'

them out to successful tenderers. For several years, Loke Yew had held major tax farms for opium, liquor and other items, in both Perak and Selangor. John Russell was told that 'towkay' Loke Yew was probably the richest businessman in Malaya.

Raja Laut, Raja Bot, Yap Kwan Seng and Loke Yew were all members of the State Legislative Council, the state's highest law-making body. The first three had also been appointed members of the newly-formed Sanitary Board, forerunner of the Kuala Lumpur municipal council.

Standing next to Loke Yew was Tambusamy Pillai, a Singalese Tamil, who represented the Indian community. He had originally come to Selangor as clerk to the lawyer Davidson, the first British Resident. Thereafter, he had served in the State Treasury, and even acted as State Treasurer for a time. After retiring from government service, Tambusamy Pillai had joined Loke Yew in a successful mining venture, as a result of which he was now comparatively wealthy. Dressed in a *dhoti* and jacket of fine white cotton, Tambusamy Pillai constantly wagged his head and gesticulated with hands and arms as he smiled and chatted with his neighbours in the line. John learned that Tambusamy willingly gave his full co-operation to the government in the recent vaccination campaign, and was known as a generous contributor to local charities.

Although these five Asian 'community leaders' had been accorded an honoured place on the reception committee, they possessed few executive powers. Apart from the British Resident himself, real authority lay with the senior British officials in the State, an equal number of whom stood in the welcoming line-up: the Chief Magistrate, the Commissioner of Lands, the Superintendent of Public Works, the State Treasurer and the Residency Surgeon.

The Chief Magistrate, Conway Belfield, a lawyer, presided over the state's senior court where he was frequently assisted by 'assessors'. The two Rajas were called upon to help with legal issues involving Malays, the Capitan China with those for Chinese, and Tambusamy Pillai for those concerning Indians. John Russell would have learnt, probably with some astonishment, that no independent lawyers were permitted to practise in the state. At that time, petition writers provided the only recourse for either complainants or defendants. As William Maxwell was himself a lawyer, no doubt he kept a critical eye on Belfield's judicial decisions.

However, perhaps the state's most unenviable job was that of the Commissioner of Lands, L.P. Ebden. When Rodgers was Chief Magistrate, before he became Resident of Pahang, he had combined his legal duties with those of Commissioner of Lands, but after he left, a separate Land Office had been established with Ebden in charge. Under ancient feudal arrangements, land ownership had been granted or withdrawn more or less at the behest of local chiefs. In country areas, remote from settlements, native farmers could cultivate land which they had won from the jungle, or relinquish possession of it, without interference. In such areas, no records had ever existed, while in more settled districts although land ownership might be granted verbally by local chiefs, it could not be properly defined owing to the absence of

accurate surveying. Hampered by the lack of surveyors, the lack of written titles and the ability of occupants to 'prove' their tenure, Ebden lived with the depressing realization that most Land Office problems could never be solved in his own lifetime. Unfortunately for Ebden, William Maxwell considered himself an expert on land matters, having once been Commissioner of Lands for the Straits Settlements after several months in Australia studying the subject. He had also initiated new land laws for Perak.

At that time, in April 1890, an engineer named Bellamy was the Superintendent of Public Works. His department was, in many ways, responsible for the orderly growth of the town. Buildings, roads, bridges, drains, land use, and forward planning all came into the orbit of the P.W.D. Due to a shortage of brick works, it had not been possible to replace all the wooden thatched houses in the main streets of the town, which constituted a dangerous fire hazard, and this was a constant source of irritation to Maxwell. Many of the government quarters were out of date, and needed upgrading. Government furniture, for offices and houses, was also the responsibility of the P.W.D. Skilled carpenters were hard to find, and in great demand by private firms, but Maxwell found it hard to accept excuses for tardiness or sub-standard workmanship. The P.W.D. was the largest government department, and one which endured a continuous barrage of criticism. To add to Bellamy's busy schedule, he too had been appointed to the new Sanitary Board.

Of more personal interest, John Russell knew that the British Resident was annoyed with Bellamy: first, over the delay in building the Printing Office, and, secondly, over the lack of up-to-date accommodation for the Russell family.

A.R. Venning, the State Treasurer, was one of Selangor's most conscientious officials. Punctilious in all his dealings, he was widely respected by his colleagues in government and also by local businessmen. Venning's primary tasks were controlling the money supply, supervising the newly established Chartered Bank in Kuala Lumpur, ensuring that government officials received their proper pay and allowances and that government departments did not exceed their approved budgets. These were heavy responsibilities, yet Venning was always ready to help in voluntary social activities; when the Selangor Club was founded in 1884 he had become its first, unpaid, secretary. He had also been responsible for creating the Lake Gardens in Kuala Lumpur, and was currently the Chairman of the management committee. Shortly before John Russell's arrival in 1890, Alfred Venning had also been made Chairman of the embryo Sanitary Board, with a wide mandate to clean up the deplorable conditions in some of Kuala Lumpur's town areas.

Last to be presented on this occasion was the State's senior medical officer, whose official title was 'Residency Surgeon'. An English doctor named Sinclair, his presence at least indicated that no serious outbreak of disease required his attendance elsewhere. He was in charge of two Kuala Lumpur hospitals: the 'General Hospital' and the 'Pauper Hospital'.

John Russell had always been assured that Kuala Lumpur was a healthy place, and this appeared to be true, at least for Europeans who invariably lived some distance away from the congested parts of the town. The main ailments were

beri-beri, malaria, smallpox, cholera, dysentry and venereal diseases. At that time, the causes of beri-beri and malaria were unknown, and there were no known antidotes for them. Most of the other illnesses could be effectively treated provided they were diagnosed early. Venereal diseases, however, were particularly troublesome.

In 1890 there were thirty-nine registered brothels in Kuala Lumpur containing 561 prostitutes who were also registered with the police. The majority of these women were Chinese. To travellers and newcomers, including the Russells, it must have seemed incredible that an administration run by strait-laced Victorians should have countenanced such a state of affairs. However, it would be explained *sotto voce* that more than 30,000 Chinese labourers, without womenfolk, worked in the tin mines within walking distance of the town: opium, gambling and occasional visits to brothels were their only pleasures in life. If these sinful amenities were withdrawn, labour would be unobtainable, tin mines would be forced to close, and the most valuable element in the state's finances would cease to exist. A particularly delicate part of Dr Sinclair's job was to see that venereal diseases did not get out of control — which ideally would have meant closing the brothels . . .

After a warning hoot of its whistle as it approached the station, the official train halted at the platform precisely on time. As the Acting Governor stepped from his compartment, the band struck up the British National Anthem, and the assembled company lapsed into respectful silence. Sir Frederick Dickson came to attention, raising his hand in salute whilst the Sikh contingent presented arms. When these formalities had been completed, William Maxwell introduced the members of his reception committee. Much hand-shaking ensued. A child presented a bouquet to Lady Dickson. Then the principal participants left the station for the Residency in a procession of private carriages.

For the duration of their stay on this occasion, Sir Frederick and Lady Dickson were the guests of William Maxwell and his charming wife. The Residency was the only government house which could accommodate the Governor's comparatively small party. A greater problem for Maxwell had been finding suitable accommodation for Sultan Abdul Samad and his retinue, due to arrive on the following day. Fortunately, a wealthy Chinese tin miner, whose house was larger than the Residency, had generously agreed to stay elsewhere so that the Sultan and his followers could occupy the building.

Since the Sultan's first visit to Kuala Lumpur in 1886, the town had acquired recognition as the capital of Selangor, having a much larger population than any other settlement in the state. Consequently, arrangements for Abdul Samad's reception on Tuesday, 15th April 1890, were even more elaborate than those for the Governor. The Sikh police and the new band were now supplemented by colourful Malay escorts for the Sultan. Later on the same day, His Highness paid a courtesy call on the Acting Governor at the Residency. That evening the Residency party visited a new Chinese theatre in the town, where they watched a typical Chinese opera, with actors in resplendent costumes.

On Wednesday, 16th April, Sir Frederick returned the Sultan's call; they afterwards watched an impressive demonstration of marching, firing, and bayonet practice by the Sikh police on the Parade Ground in front of the new Selangor Club. This was an occasion when all the inhabitants of the town had a chance to see the assembled nobility and to witness the formidable skills of the military police. Hundreds of people gathered around the Parade Ground, and the club buildings were crowded with members and their children, including the Russell family.

These events gave the Russells the rare opportunity to see the much revered Sultan Abdul Samad, who normally stayed close to his simple *istana*, or palace, in the remote village of Jugra, near the coast. They would have seen an old but erect man of medium height, slightly built and of light-brown complexion. A fine forehead and handsome features gave him an unmistakable air of distinction. Because he was now engaged on an official visit, he was accompanied everywhere by a retainer with a golden umbrella, signifying Royalty. He was dressed in silk and cloth of gold. Sometimes he also wore an embroidered Malay coat with diamond buttons. During this visit he appeared with the insignia of the Order of St. Michael and St. George awarded to him by Queen Victoria. Wherever he went, he had an escort of armed followers.

After the colourful display on the Parade Ground, there was to be a dance at the Residency that evening, to which John and Frances were invited. Organized by William Maxwell, the occasion included a maximum of ceremony and formality. On arriving at the Residency, each man was handed a piece of paper on which the dances were set forth according to a strict programme, together with the name of the man's partner for each dance! Each man's supper companion was pre-ordained in a similar way. This arrangement was guaranteed to remove any possible pleasure from the event: wives disliked seeing their husbands waltzing with flirtatious women, and husbands resented their wives being in the arms of the town's Romeos. There was, however, no escape: the band played remorselessly until the early hours of the following morning, and guests could not leave the Residency until the pre-arranged programme had been completed.

All these preliminary events were faithfully recorded in the weekly edition of the *Singapore Free Press* of 22nd April 1890. The report concluded:

> *'The great day, however, to which all these festivities were the prelude was Thursday, 17th. on which the new Klang bridge was to be opened. Two special trains conveyed all Kwala Lumpor down to Bukit Kuda, where the formal ceremony of declaring the bridge open was to take place about nine a.m. On arriving at Bukit Kuda, the official train slowly steamed across the bridge, cutting on its way red and yellow ribbons . . .'*

The account continued by describing how Sir Frederick Dickson had personally inspected the bridge before being invited by the Sultan to open it on his behalf. Sir Frederick referred to the work as being 'the greatest of its kind hitherto carried out in the Malay Peninsula'. He congratulated the Government Railway Engineer, the contractor and all who had a hand in the work. Finally, he thanked the Sultan for his own hearty welcome in Selangor.

After the departure of His Highness and his escort . . .

'The company then adjourned to a champagne and sandwich breakfast given by Mr. Macboan, the representative of the contractors, and the success of the bridge was drunk with due honours. A photograph of the party was then taken by Mr. Watkins, and an engine was christened by Lady Dickson. His Excellency and party then proceeded by the new extension line to Klang, where the new station — though not yet finished — was prettily decorated, as indeed was the rest of the town, and after inspecting the Fort, His Excellency entertained a number of his friends on board the 'Sea Belle' at lunch. About 1.30, after the guests had said their farewells, the anchor was weighed, and the 'Sea Belle' slowly steamed down the river, on its way to Penang, after four very pleasant days spent in Selangor.'

ADVERTISEMENTS.

THE *Selangor Government Gazette* will, as a rule, be published on every alternate Friday.

Advertisements for insertion should be sent in to the Government Printing Office, not later than noon on the Tuesday previous to publication.

Scale of Charges for Advertising in "The Selangor Government Gazette."

Fifteen lines and under—	
First insertion	$2.00
Subsequent insertions, each ...	0.50
More than fifteen lines and under half a column—	
First insertion	3.00
Subsequent insertions, each ...	$1.00
Over half a column and up to a whole column—	
First insertion	5.00
Subsequent insertions, each ...	2.00

SUBSCRIPTION.

Single copies, each	$0.25
Annual Subscription (in advance)	$5.00

JOHN RUSSELL,
Government Printer.

The First Gazettes

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Satisfied that John Russell had succeeded in recruiting an embryo staff in Singapore, and assured that the new Printing Office could be occupied sometime in June 1890, William Maxwell began to assemble items for Selangor's first *Gazette*. Naturally, the British Resident was anxious to demonstrate that the establishment of the printing organization had been worth the expense, since it had come into existence entirely through his own initiative. He was also determined to illustrate the size of his territory, and the scope of its administration — matters often unappreciated in Singapore and London. District Officers in the most outlying districts were invited to record their achievements for this publication.

Meanwhile, John Russell was kept busy receiving his newly recruited employees from Singapore, finding them accommodation, and putting them to work unpacking and cleaning equipment. As soon as the cement floor of the building was properly set, and the roof completed, he began to install the printing press, a task which required his personal supervision at every stage. He also decided on the exact placing of the all-important flat-bed, or stone, on which pages would be assembled before printing. The trays, racks, and desks arrived safely from the carpenter in Singapore, and eventually the boxes of type were distributed amongst the new compositors.

Without having more than a vague idea of the amount of material for printing, and under pressure from Maxwell, John reluctantly agreed that the first *Gazette* could be published on 27th June 1890. At the same time he asked for entries to be given to him as early as possible, so that they could be type-set and checked in plenty of time.

From the end of May and the beginning of June, John began to receive a substantial number of entries for the first publication, and, when additional items arrived from the Residency, ever-present fear of a shortage of type became a reality. His nightmare had begun.

When he saw the latest batch of hand-written entries, he realized that the first *Gazette* would contain at least twenty full pages, many more than could be set with the available type for a continuous run.

Compositors set each line of type into an iron frame, or 'chase', of page size. When complete this was known as a 'forme' for inking and printing. In normal practice, the page formes for a publication made a complete set and would be retained intact, at least for a limited period, in case extra copies were required.

Notice regarding advertisement which appeared in the first Government Gazette *printed in Selangor on 27 June 1890.*

Where there was insufficient type to complete the formes for a whole publication — as in the present case — the formes of the early pages had to be broken up immediately after printing, so that the pieces of type could be re-set for later pages. Naturally, this caused a time-consuming disruption to

the whole printing process, and inevitably resulted in a great deal of extra work for the staff, besides anxious days and nights for the Government Printer.

It was now too late to obtain additional supply of type. Even if John Russell had ordered it when he first suspected that this problem might arise, another consignment could never have arrived in time. Besides, he had agreed to the publication date, and further delay was out of the question.

At that time, night work in the tropics was particularly trying, it being almost impossible to keep insects, including mosquitos, out of any workshop. Printers had to handle minute slivers of metal type for individual letters and these tiny objects were not easy to identify even in daylight. At night, with lighting restricted to smoking oil lamps and guttering candles, the work became slow and tortuous even in the most skilled hands.

Despite these difficulties, the first *Gazette* printed in Selangor was delivered to the Residency in the early morning of 27th June 1890, after John and his staff had worked throughout the night. There were no delays and no printing errors. It was a first-class publication of twenty-five pages, in impeccable English. William Maxwell was delighted.

In forwarding his requisition for more type to London, John no doubt enclosed a copy of his first *Gazette* for Mr Dishman's private perusal. However, through no fault on Dishman's part, supplementary orders to the Crown Agents for items such as type were subject to a laborious tender procedure which took many months to complete. In the meantime, difficulties with type continued for the printing of several more fortnightly *Gazettes*, until, in October 1890, trouble became concentrated on 'figures' rather than 'letters'. The quantity of numbers required to print the 1891 Estimates caused John's haunting fears to return with a vengeance.

After only four pages of the Estimates had been printed, the compositors ran out of figures. Formes had to be broken up and the process repeated. Again, by toiling alongside his workers at all hours, whilst taking full responsibility at the same time, John succeeded in producing the required result — without complaint. Fortunately, by the end of 1890, an adequate supply of type had been received from London.

An indication of the progress of printing in John Russell's first year may be gained from two separate Annual Reports. In the P.W.D. report for 1890, the following item appears:

> *'PRINTING OFFICE. — A printing Office has also been built under contract with Messrs. Gordon and Cargill, but not entirely satisfactorily, chiefly owing to the necessity of starting the printing as quickly as possible, and having the building occupied. Several additions such as enclosing the verandahs, have been done since completion. The cost of the building was $4,170. The building is of brickwork throughout with tiled roof and cement floor, and was designed for the addition of an upper floor.'*

Secondly, the following extract is taken from the British Resident's Annual Report for the same year:

'PRINTING

Up to the end of 1889 the printing work of the State had been very satisfactorily carried out by the Singapore and Straits Printing Office, Singapore (Messrs. Fraser and Neave), but in view of the increasing requirements of the State, of the delay and expenses consequent on communication with Singapore and of the decision (with the concurrence of H.E. the Governor) to issue a Government Gazette from the beginning of 1890, it became necessary to organise a Government Printing Office at Kwala Lumpur.'

'A suitable building has accordingly been erected. The Government Printer (Mr John Russell) arrived in the State in March, but it was not till June that the office was sufficiently advanced to allow of the erection of plant. The Government Gazette of the 27th June was printed in Selangor.'

'The demands upon the Printing Office during the first year of its existence have necessarily been heavy and, unfortunately, the supply of type ordered in the first instance proved altogether insufficient. At one time, the first portion of the Gazette had always to be broken up after coming off the machine in order that the latter portion might be completed. When the Estimates were printed, in October, it was found possible to print only four fresh pages at a time. The type was then distributed and four fresh pages set up. Working, however, under these and other disadvantages, Mr Russell has succeeded in meeting the ordinary requirements of Departments as regards the printing of forms, ruled books with printed headings, circulars, notices, etc.'

'During the year the office was improved and properly fitted up and fresh orders were sent home for type, machinery and paper. The Government Gazette has proved a most useful publication, it is excellently printed, and has appeared with commendable regularity.'

Most of the above report was no doubt based on John's own notes, but the compliments would have been added by Maxwell himself, who was a man not normally disposed to praise.

In general, 1890 had been a year of progress in Selangor. With the opening of the Connaught Bridge, rail communication with Klang had been improved. In Kuala Lumpur, a branch line now ran from the railway station, behind the Chartered Bank's new building near the south eastern corner of the Parade Ground, past the Selangor Club, and thence northwards to Kepong.

Tin mining had been sustained, and more jungle had been cleared for coffee growing. The Sanitary Board was gradually getting to grips with Kuala Lumpur's worst problems, and the volunteer fire-brigade had become well-trained and efficient. The population of the State had steadily increased.

Also in 1890, a group of senior government officers and some influential businessmen, previously members of the Selangor Club, decided to set up another meeting place — The Lake Club — to cater for 'senior residents'. The Lake Club was built on the fringe of the Lake Gardens, some distance from the town, and the location was really convenient only for owners of private carriages.

In the Government Estimates for 1891, the salary of the Government Printer was approved at $175 per month. The Chief Compositor was paid $45, four senior compositors $35, and two juniors $20 monthly. The senior 'Pressman' who arranged the formes, paper and ink for the press received $25 per month, and his two subordinates, $18.

Among several other junior appointments was that of a 'Machine Turner' whose monthly pay was $15. It was his job to turn the handle of the press once printing began: exhausting work on warm days and nights. The office boy, or peon, was paid $9 per month.

After provision had been made for the purchase of machinery, stationery, type and other items, the total Estimates of expenditure for the Printing Office in 1891 amounted to $12,274.

One of John Russell's earliest friends in Kuala Lumpur was H.C. Paxon, a highly qualified hydraulics engineer in charge of constructing the town's first reservoir, designed to supply piped water. Both men had similar interests, and, at the beginning of 1891, perhaps influenced by Charles Paxon, John Russell applied to become a Freemason.

In those days, government officers were encouraged to take part in community activities outside their normal duties. Some joined voluntary organizations such as the fire-brigade or church welfare bodies. Others took an interest in cricket, football, tennis, shooting and hunting wild animals. Apparently, John Russell had only a spectator's enthusiasm for any outdoor sport; now, he probably considered himself too old to become involved.

However, he had no difficulty in accepting the basic tenets of Freemasonry. These enjoined morality, charity, and obedience to the laws of the land. For admission, the applicant was required to be a respectable adult male who believed in a Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul. Although reputed to be 'the largest secret society in the world', in 1891 most leading Masons were either members of the Royal Family, high Government Officers, or distinguished professionals and businessmen.

The first Masonic Lodge in Kuala Lumpur had been established in 1889, in an upper room of a shop-house in Clarke Street. It was named Read Lodge, after W.H.M. Read, CMG, a prominent Singaporean and Mason who had recently retired to Britain. The first 'Worshipful Master' was Thomas Braddell, later Sir Thomas, at that time Acting Attorney General of the Straits Settlements. Several senior government officers were among the first members, including Harry Syers, the Superintendent of Police.

Women were entirely excluded from the secret affairs of Masonry, so this was not a pastime which could be shared between husband and wife, like gardening or stamp collecting. Furthermore, to advance within the 'brotherhood', a conscientious member had to study assidously before he could be promoted step by step up the ladder of Freemasonry.

It may be asked, therefore, why John Russell should have wished to become a Mason. Among the advantages was the fact that there were Lodges in many

countries of the world, especially within the British Empire, and a Mason could expect a fraternal welcome wherever a Lodge was to be found. This could be useful whilst on leave, or after retirement.

Also, unlike in other social clubs, up to a certain point, a Mason's standing depended less on his wealth and position than upon his qualifications as a Mason. This engendered a degree of friendly social fellowship not usually found in other clubs, particularly in Kuala Lumpur, which was renowned for its social snobbery.

An additional advantage may have been that, in those days, when a government official died before retirement, his wife and family received no benefits from the Government. If he died in service, his pension died with him. In contrast to this practice, the Freemasons had a well-earned reputation for helping the families of deceased members. Because John Russell had a wife and five small children, this factor may have played some part in his decision.

In the event, his application was approved and John was initiated into Read Lodge on 16th February 1891.

On the night of Sunday, 5th April 1891, a Government census was taken, covering the whole State of Selangor. The following are extracts from that census, which showed a total population of 81,592:

		Male	Female	Total
Europeans	. . .	145	45	190
Malays	. . .	14,107	9,643	23,750
Chinese	. . .	47,610	3,234	50,844
Tamils	. . .	2,558	524	3,082
Others	. . .			3,726

A rough classification of occupations was also given.

In Government Service	. . .	1,838
Mining	. . .	28,125
Planting	. . .	11,864
Fishing	. . .	2,528
Miscellaneous	. . .	37,237
	Total	81,592

The 'Miscellaneous' category was made up of those of no occupation, women and children, and those not included under the first four headings:

In June 1891, the Government evidently decided that the current spelling of 'Kwala' Lumpur should be changed to 'Kuala' Lumpur, and the *Gazettes* in July carried this change. In this context, the word itself means 'confluence of rivers'. Otherwise, it can refer to an estuary or the mouth of a river. Hence this change affected many other place-names throughout the peninsula. Despite this, the new spelling was slowly adopted for all Malayan maps. The word 'Lumpur', meaning mud or muddy, was also standardized: in the past,

it had frequently been spelt 'Lumpor'. Together, the two words referred to the confluence of the Gombak and Klang rivers which met near the centre of the town.

Also in June 1891, Dr Ernest Aston Otto Travers, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., at that time Residency Surgeon, Selangor, was placed in charge of the entire Medical Department of the State. Dr Travers and John Russell shared an interest and enthusiasm for history and literature, and they became good friends. Dr Travers was also an excellent shot, and regularly hunted with Harry Syers, the Superintendent of Police, another of John's early friends.

Throughout 1891, the social life of Kuala Lumpur followed a fairly rigid pattern, dictated to a large extent by the unbending character of the British Resident. The Police Band of the Philippines gave concerts on the Parade Ground twice a week, and also gave a weekly performance at the Lake Gardens and the Lake Club. Amateur nights were held irregularly in the upstairs room at the Selangor Club, where the quality of the entertainment depended entirely upon the locally available talent, which, in that small community, was necessarily limited.

Twice each month, Mrs Maxwell held an 'At Home' afternoon party at the Residency for the womenfolk of the town. In contrast to the severe reputation of her husband, Mrs Maxwell enjoyed universal esteem for her kindness and thoughtfulness towards everyone.

The year 1891 also saw the introduction of a new and immediately popular sport in Kuala Lumpur — horse racing. The first race meeting was held in the Circular Road area, on a piece of land leased by the Government. Prominent Chinese tin miners, including Loke Yew, were among the first racehorse owners.

By the end of his first year in Kuala Lumpur, John Russell had laid firm foundations for his future. He was already well respected, not only by William Maxwell, but by all who knew him.

Having only recently acquired a Government Printer, Maxwell may initially have found it difficult to share confidential information with this newcomer — information which he would previously have confided in writing to Singapore, thereby giving himself a sense of local security. It was always difficult to keep secrets, and a high degree of trust had to exist between the British Resident and his Printer.

John had to be trusted with advance information which could be highly embarrassing to the government if given premature publicity. This applied particularly to new Taxes and Tariffs, but also to Appointments and Promotions which would first be published in the *Gazette*. For important matters, formes for printing would be completed only by John Russell in person. This was not because he did not trust his own staff, but because he considered it unfair to give them unnecessary responsibility.

All his new friends and acquaintances, including his fellow Masons, respected John because he consistently declined to discuss government business off duty.

Sometime at the end of 1891, or the beginning of 1892, the Russells moved to new quarters closer to the Printing Office. Their house was now a brick building with a tiled roof, which had solid floors and a more convenient kitchen. Although there was still no piped water, there was a more modern bathroom and lavatory. This house retained the tradition of cooling verandahs, but now the solid walls could at least be decorated with pictures, photographs or mirrors, and the roof was no longer a domain for animals and insects.

In March 1892 came the news that William Maxwell was to become the Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements in Singapore, and elaborate preparations were made for his departure from Selangor. His love for pomp and ceremony were well known, and the citizenry reacted accordingly.

On the day of his departure, beneath a decorative archway which had been erected in the grounds of the Residency, Raja Laut delivered an address on behalf of the Malay community. Another address awaited Maxwell when his carriage arrived at the Selangor club, where a similar eulogy was pronounced for the British inhabitants. Finally, on reaching the railway station, he was regaled by the Chinese leaders with a lengthy address in verse. This was precisely the kind of occasion which Maxwell relished.

His successor could scarcely have been more different, or indeed more unexpected. This was Ernest Woodford Birch, the son of J.W.W. Birch, the British Resident of Perak, whose murder in 1875 had influenced the entire subsequent history of the peninsula.

Ernest Birch was born in April 1857, and was 18 at the time of his father's assassination. Having finished his education at Harrow, he became a Colonial Office Cadet in 1876, remaining a Cadet until 1878 when he was transferred to the Straits Settlements in Singapore. Thereafter, he had served in various capacities in Singapore and Malacca, until 1892 when he was appointed Acting British Resident of Selangor.

When he arrived in Kuala Lumpur, Birch was just thirty-five, slightly younger than John Russell. He was accompanied by his charming wife, Margaret, whom he had married in 1882.

Ernest Birch's arrival was possibly greeted with a degree of apprehension by some older Malays and government officers who had heard something of the character of the murdered Resident. Would the son have the same stern, rigid and haughty attitude as his late father?

Any such fears soon proved groundless. From the outset of his term as acting Resident, Ernest Birch breathed new life into the somewhat stodgy atmosphere of Kuala Lumpur. He was not only a most competent administrator, but he also played an active part in outdoor sports, including cricket, at which he was outstanding. His enthusiasm for work and play was infectious: the sound of merry laughter was heard within the hitherto forbidding halls of the Residency.

John Russell found a refreshing change in his relationship with the Resident. Preparations for each fortnightly *Gazette* entailed almost daily meetings

between the two men. In the course of a few months, a close and friendly bond was established between the Resident and his Printer. Their meetings were usually held in the mornings, at the beginning of a day's work. However, unlike his predecessor, Ernest Birch frequently extended these interviews to discuss more philosophical matters. Both men were interested in history, especially Malayan history, and both realised that, aside from the bare bones of the *Gazettes*, and in the absence of local newspapers, there was no permanent record of passing events.

After further discussions with government officials and civilian leaders, Birch decided that the Government should sponsor a new publication to be known as the *Selangor Journal*, which would be issued in alternate weeks to the *Gazettes*. A committee of three government officers would be responsible for this publication: Dr Travers, the Residency Surgeon, W.W. Skeat, a District Officer, and John Russell as Editor.

The *Selangor Journal* was expected to be self-supporting through subscriptions and advertisements, and all material for inclusion must be relevant to Selangor and approved by the committee, the members of which would not, however, be held responsible for views expressed by either contributors or correspondents.

This publication, which was to be printed and published by the Government Printing Office, was a remarkably confident gesture on the part of a British administration — almost inviting criticism. Nevertheless, neither Ernest Birch, nor any member of the committee, had any doubts about its success.

Cover of The Selangor Journal: Jottings Past and Present

THE

SELANGOR JOURNAL:

JOTTINGS PAST AND PRESENT.

VOL. I.

Kuala Lumpur:
PRINTED AT THE SELANGOR GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1903.

12 The Selangor Journal

The first *Selangor Journal* was published on Friday, 23rd September 1892, and priced at 25 cents a copy.

It had the following introduction:

> *'With this, its initial number, the* Selangor Journal *makes a bow, so to speak, before the Public, and begs to give the reasons for its appearance. The records of the State, social and otherwise, are falling into oblivion, and unless some effort is made to preserve them it will become a difficult matter to make a reference to past events with any degree of accuracy. It is therefore necessary that something be done to prevent the history of Selangor getting beyond recall; not only as to what is occurring at the present time, but more especially as regards the past. In addition to this, there are many subjects connected with daily life in the State which would be none the worse for a little comment; but no convenient outlet for which has up to the present existed. To endeavour to meet these wants is the chief aim of the* Selangor Journal*: an account of all matters of interest occurring in the State to-day will be attempted, and under the heading of "Retrospective Notes" as much of past history as can be gleaned from reliable sources will be given. A high standard of literary excellence must not be looked for, and subscribers must bear in mind the object of the project.'*

From the beginning, the *Journal* incorporated a sub-title 'Jottings Past and Present', and invariably its first pages were filled with short paragraphs of 'Notes and News' compiled by the Editor.

In the first number, among snippets of news about the movements of District Officers, tree planting, flooding etc., was included a short item referring to entertainment. This was, of course, a severe dig at the previous Resident — and an injunction to any future like-minded kill-joy:

> *'Wherever else officialdom may be allowed to have scope, it is quite certain that it should be rigorously excluded from the ball-room. To arrange any official quadrille, to dictate officially in the choice of partners, or to select each official couple for sending to the supper-room, irrespective of their own free choice, can only be looked upon as a relic of barbarism, caught probably from the rustic manners of some semi-developed Native State. We sincerely hope that all such follying will be carefully shunned in future.'*

John Russell and his fellow committee members knew that activities of this kind would never be tolerated whilst Ernest Birch was the Acting Resident.

Articles in the Journal were either signed with a contributor's initials, or with a thinly disguised pseudonym. In the first number, over the name 'Harley', there appeared a vigorous attack on the treatment of the town's gharry horses. This was, no doubt, penned by Dr Travers. The following are extracts from this article:

"DUMB CREATURES WE HAVE CHERISHED HERE BELOW."

The sun has its spots and Selangor has its gharries, gharry syces and gharry ponies . . .

Arriving at Kuala Lumpur by the morning train one day four years ago I first saw the ghastly exhibition of horsehair and bone (I nearly said flesh) which can still be seen in front of the Railway Station every morning. Whether the identical ponies which shocked every feeling of humanity in me then are still in use, I cannot say. If it were not so improbable that Providence would permit any animal to suffer more than a year, in the manner that these creatures do, I should be inclined to believe, from the similarity of their appearance that the same ponies which were being brutally ill treated in 1888 are still lingering on and undergoing the same torments in 1892.

More than two years ago, after having seen some unusually heartless cruelty, I asked Government to give me assistance in obtaining the services of an Inspector for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, but my request was not granted. I was informed that the police were keeping a rigorous watch over the gharry syces in order to prevent the ponies being ill used . . .

Last year I brought up the question of Government assistance again.

I requested the Government to permit the society (a branch of which I wished to establish in Selangor) to keep the fines imposed by the Magistrates in cases in which the Society was the prosecutor.

Although I pointed out that this was allowed in the Colony, I grieve to say that I was again disappointed in the Government...

It is difficult to believe that there can be any reason why our gharries, ponies and syces should be inferior to those of the other Native States. The fact, however, still remains that they are much inferior to those of Perak and Sungei Ujong, and it is doubtful whether there are ten gharries and ponies in Selangor that would be granted a third-class license in the Colony.'

'HARLEY.'

Although this was strong criticism of the Government, it also reflected badly on the Police Force — the licensing authority for gharries — the Superintendent of which was one of the doctor's regular hunting companions! This genuine complaint, however, was accepted with good humour and the situation improved, albeit slowly.

The 'Colony' mentioned was the Straits Settlements in general, and Singapore in particular.

Among other articles in the first number was an interesting account of the life-style of His Highness, Sultan Abdul Samad, at home in his palace at Jugra. There was also an extract from the diary of J.W.W. Birch, made in 1874 during a visit to Selangor. This was supplied by Ernest Birch from

papers which he had inherited from his father. Another article dealt with the absence of hotels in Kuala Lumpur, and this point was reiterated by the letter from 'Correspondent' who must have known of the impending publication of the *Journal*:

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of the Selangor Journal.

SIR, — As a recent visitor to Kuala Lumpur, I should like, through the medium of your paper, to call attention to the Rest House, the sole and only place of accommodation available, unless one throws oneself on the hospitality of friends.

In such a prosperous and go-ahead place as Kuala Lumpur this Rest House is really a disgrace.

On entering the dining-room one feels depressed by the gloomy appearance of the place, and sitting down to dinner one notices the greasy uncleaned appearance of the plates, knives, forks and spoons. The food is very badly cooked, and consists, in a large proportion of tinned provisions, which in a town of the size of Kuala Lumpur is obviously unnecessary: abundance of fresh fish, beef and mutton are always obtainable in the market.

The bed-rooms are objects of horror which I shall not soon forget. The floors are concrete, and evidently have not been swept for countless ages. They are absolutely destitute of any sort of matting, although $10 would buy white straw matting sufficient for all the rooms. The beds are disgusting; the mosquito curtains are dirty and torn, the mattresses have a decidedly musty smell, and one is often compelled to sleep on a sheet and pillow-case which has already been used by former occupants. When the sheets finally get sent to the dhobi, the visitors in the interim have to go without until they are returned.

The bath-rooms are badly kept, slimy, and smell most objectionable. No bathing-tin is provided (cost 10 cents); but, instead, there is an old biscuit box.

In the hope that publicity may, at any rate, draw attention to these evils, most of which might easily be remedied.

I am,
A SUFFERING VISITOR.

Government Rest Houses were intended as an amenity for travellers: the P.W.D. was responsible for the buildings and the supervision of the management.

The items quoted are the earliest examples of the *Journal's* stated aim of pinpointing 'many subjects connected with daily life in the State which would be none the worse for a little comment'. Naturally, this bold venture could never have been published without the co-operation, or at least the connivance, of Ernest Birch.

An item in the 'Notes and News' pages of the second number shows that the *Journal's* committee members lacked neither courage nor confidence:

> *'Some kind friends of ours, while lauding the idea of a magazine for Selangor, as an effort in the right direction, have been troubled with great searchings of heart as to whether it will "live." To these we would respectfully make answer, with a proper sense of gratitude for their good opinion of our fosterling, that the question is neither here nor there. The magazine will last while there is work for it to do: when that work is done, it will be no hardship for the editors to stop editing; and the limit of time, whether it be six months or a year, or a series of years, does not greatly fill them with concern.'*

Future numbers of the *Journal* were published regularly every alternate Friday, and contained a fascinating selection of day-to-day news items, together with authentic glimpses of the past.

Although many of the news items bear the stamp of John Russell's style, it was not until 2nd December 1892, in the sixth number of the *Journal*, that there appeared a complete article written by John, in which he refers to himself as 'the Caxtonian'.

This article is an account of a week-end spent at Dusun Tua, a place renowned for its hot springs where the government had built a rest house for visitors.

The 'child' in the narrative was almost certainly John's eldest son, George Dearie Russell, on the threshold of his fourteenth birthday. The identity of the 'engineer' is unknown, but the fact that he worked in an engineering 'shop' of the P.W.D. would have been enough to endear him to a creatively minded boy of George's age. 'Charles' was undoubtedly Charles Paxon, John's fellow Mason.

SOME ACCOUNT OF A TRIP TO DUSUN TUA.

The great wave of work flowing through the P.W.D. had in its course splashed a few drops into the shop of the Engineer — or, as he might will be termed, the Unconscious One — necessitating a visit to the Rest House at Dusun Tua. To "Charles, his Friend," he suggested the idea of walking there; an idea taken up by Charles with alacrity, who further undertook all arrangements connected with the commissariat. The Child, who acts as Chorus to the Unconscious One, and the Caxtonian were invited to be of the party. The baggage of the intending pedestrians was despatched by bullock cart on the Friday, and at one o'clock on Saturday, the 19th ult. the Caxtonian made his way to the Selangor Club there to meet the Engineer and the Child. Charles was to join the party on the Ampang Road. The elation of the Caxtonian at the prospect of an excursion, the first since his arrival in the State, was somewhat at tempered by doubts as to whether, although he intended to be back at 10 A.M. on Monday, he ought to have had a lot of leave-papers signed before venturing out of Kuala Lumpur: so it was with quite a guilty feeling that he passed the Sikh on guard outside the Government Offices and glanced with dread at the flag flying at the Residency.

The sight of the Child put to flight these thoughts and he gaily stepped into a gharry that was waiting, cheered by the reflection that for nearly 48 hours he would be free from importunities to produce, as a special favour, either wedding-cards or dance programmes, or be called upon to write explanatory minutes with regard to "Errata." But alas! scarcely had it been decided that the floor was the best place for the three topees, after an ineffectual endeavour to make them pagoda-like occupy the vacant seat, and hardly had the most comfortable arrangement of three pairs of legs been come to in a space barely sufficient for two, when the Unconscious One produced a copy of the Journal, and had read only a few lines when he burst into boisterous mirth. The Caxtonian shivered perceptibly: he tried to think whether there was something really funny in No. 5, but the Engineer gave him little time for thought . . .'

Here the engineer referred mockingly to a scientific article which had appeared in the previous number of the *Journal*.

It was useless for the Caxtonian to urge that the scientific gentlemen who wrote the article knew what he was about, and that to alter "copy" would be a breach of faith. The Engineer pooh-poohed this and then proceeded to detect other flaws in the piece, the Caxtonian clearly seeing that the spirit of his holiday had already departed.

At the fourth mile Charles was met and the gharry dismissed, 1.30 P.M. It was then discovered that the Child, in addition to a net and pickle-jar for catching moths, was encumbered with a brown-paper parcel. Imagine a brown-paper parcel and a ten mile jungle walk. The Child explained that the obnoxious bundle contained mosquito-curtain, he having been given to understand that they were short of them at Dusun Tua. Both Charles and the Caxtonian, as Government officials, felt called upon to take up the cudgels on behalf of the institution run by the State, and informed the Child that the Government of Selangor did not do things by halves, and that when it was stated that a Rest House was furnished it could be taken for granted that such was the case. If the Child was not such an irrepressible, unabashable youngster he would have felt that he was thoroughly and properly sat on: but he didn't. He said it would be all right if each did a share of carrying it. The idea was not considered a good one, so the dreadful parcel was left at a Chinese shop about a mile out of Ampang.

The path is fairly well marked and gives few opportunities of going awry. Twice a false move was made: the first time the path taken led to a mine, where a China-man soon put the party on the right track and the second time that the wrong path was taken it so soon became impassable that the mistake was quickly apparent. In some places the path ascends very quickly and unless one is in condition it is a stiff pull. Writing from memory, the worst walking seemed to be between the seventh and ninth miles. Charles, who was suffering for a cold, felt the walk rather trying hereabouts: it was at this point he was heard to offer fabulous sums for a bottle of beer, or a green coconut, or fruit of any kind. It was here that the Engineer seemed quite unconscious of other people's suffering, and plodded on in front, with the Chorus close at his heels and here, too, it may be remarked how gamely the Child stuck to it. It was very necessary that someone should take the lead and force the pace, because the negotiations re getting rid of the brown paper incubus had caused dire loss of a lot of time.

THE

SELANGOR JOURNAL:

JOTTINGS PAST AND PRESENT

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In places the path runs along the edge of valleys that are very deep indeed, and much magnificent timber is seen. At many points of the walk a halt to look about would have well repaid the travellers, but the lateness of the hour and the uncertainty of the road to their destination precluded this. On their way they came up to and passed some of Charles' coolies: Charles and the Caxtonian eagerly examined the barang-barang of the various coolies to find something drinkable; and when it was discovered that the nearest approach to anything liquid was a tin of salt butter, their disappointment was pitiable.

The longest lane has its turning, and some road metal stacked in cubes and a number of Ranigungee drain-pipes gave notice of the proximity of a village of some sort, and soon the party entered Ulu Langat. The Caxtonian had started with the intention of seeing as much as possible: but he sat down on the first seat he came to in Ulu Langat, and Charles sat beside him, and nought could move them to explore even the high street, when they learnt that the road to Dusun Tua lay in the other direction.

The Engineer was anxious to get on. So leaving Charles and the Child to wait for some green coconuts, he, accompanied by the Caxtonian started off at a good pace on the last portion of the journey. From Ulu Langat to Dusun Tua the road is straight and wide, and when its level is made up to that of the several bridges recently erected, and the metal stone stacked along the roadside has been spread, the Ginting Peras road will be a good one to traverse. In wet weather it must be heavy going. The party, however, were fortunate in this respect, and were able to appreciate the scenery at those points where the river could be seen brawling and tumbling along; at one place, especially, just before arriving at Dusun Tua, the view, looking up the river, arched in by large overhanging trees on each bank, was really beautiful.

A gentleman belonging to the P.W.D. who had walked forward to meet the Engineer led the way to the ferry. A shout of "Kabun!" brought into sight a very cranky sampan: the heart of the Caxtonian, who is exceedingly nervous, sank within him, and he glanced around in vain to discover some other means of reaching the opposite shore. His feelings were not relieved by the nearer approach of the sampan, which proved to be half full of water and leaking dreadfully. Lady visitors, arriving at the Rest House tired and worn out after the walk from Ulu Langat — the road can hardly be used for vehicles — must find this last item an inconvenient and uncomfortable one. The first piles for constructing a bridge are now being driven; it will be a great improvement when the bridge is completed.

No mishap occurred, and the "boat," wobbling safely across the stream, deposited its passengers on the verge of the Rest House grounds. It was a clear, calm evening, and the beauty of the spot was seen to great advantage. The view from the verandah, though a trifle circumscribed, was very fine: on the left the river, rushing and swirling, gave the place its chief charm; in front, across the lawn, rose the jungle, sombre and dark in the evening light; while on the right could be seen the steam ascending from the hot spring. It gave one an uncanny feeling to watch this steam rising out of the earth, and the impression was not lessened by a nearer inspection. Boulders of grey rock, worn into all kinds of shapes and grooves by the action of the water, stood out in verdureless bareness; and in the hollows and crevices where the water had settled a peculiar-looking

deposit, greenish-black and frothy floated on its surface. The almost boiling water, steaming and giving off an unpleasant odour, rushed out of a hole in the side of a kind of sump that has lately been made: and gazing at this tank, in the dim light, with the vapour hovering around it, one could imagine that by clambering up and looking over its edge a glimpse into some infernal region might be had.

Charles and the Child had by this time rejoined the party, which wended its way back to the Rest House. The Engineer had informed the others that he had engaged all four bedrooms: he meant well — but there were only two. There were two bedsteads, and four cane sofas; but only four mattresses and four sheets; no blankets. At this the Child pricked up his ears, and remembering the lesson he had received on the Ampang Road, said there must be a mistake: "If Government said a Rest House was furnished," etc. This formula he repeated when he discovered that towels were not provided; when a piece of calico with a light check pattern was brought forth to do duty for a table-cloth; when he was told there were no table napkins, and when he had to wait his turn to use a spoon.

But of the merits and demerits of the Bungalow at Dusun Tua, and the return journey, Charles has promised to write in a future number.

True to his promise, Charles wrote 'Home Again' in the seventh issue of the Journal published on Friday, 16th December 1892. He describes how the Caxtonian and the Child erected a bamboo bridge across a stream 'with the ease of experienced junglewallahs', so that he could take a photograph of Dusun Tua before their departure. Charles also comments on the deplorable services at the Rest House.

In the same number of the Journal, John Russell introduced Christmas in 'Notes and News':

A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

It is hard indeed to avoid a feeling that we are only "playing at Christmas" in the tropics. Where is the snow? The thermometer is insultingly high, 90, or more, in the shade. Where are the fur-lined cloaks of the ladies and the hot mulled drinks of the sterner sort? Where is the skating, and the pleasant gathering of old (and young) familiar faces? Where is the Christmas log with its magnetic attraction, after a day of bright ringing frost, and where are the ghost-stories told around it in the uncertain twilight? Where are the holly and the ivy and — the Spinster's friend — the mystic mistletoe bough, cut by antediluvian druids with a golden sickle upon an antediluvian oak? And where, oh! where, are our old friends the Waits? Their absence, surely is "the most unkindest cut of all," and we turn for comfort to our most ancient pipe and the ubiquitous peg — or if we are of the fairer sex to the well-iced lime squash — with a scarcely repressed conviction that Christmas in the tropics is a hollow mockery and a snare — until the time comes to dress for the Fancy Dress Ball!'

Despite John's pretended melancholy, and the absence of 'Waits', or carol singers, Christmas in the Kuala Lumpur of 1892 was celebrated with gusto.

The fancy dress event was held at the Selangor Club, and John recorded a full description in the Journal of 30th December. He wrote:

> *The Fancy Dress Ball, to which we have all been looking forward with much anticipation of enjoyment, may be pronounced to have been a far more brilliant success than that hoped for by even the most sanguine.*

Ernest Birch came dressed as a French Guards Officer, while his wife was arrayed as a Cantonese Lady. More than eighty European men and women took part in the fancy dress parade, and the dancing continued until 4 o'clock next morning.

The Birches, who had six offspring of their own, gave a highly successful children's party at the Residency, which was also fully reported.

In this last *Journal* of 1892, John Russell contributed his own light-hearted ghost story:

MY GHOST.

It was our first Christmas in the East. For some time previously the children had talked of nothing else: I had promised them that the festive season should be observed in due and ancient form. "Roast beef, plum-pudding, snap-dragons" — I had got as far as this in enumeration of things which to my mind were essential to Christmas, when one of the youngsters said, "And a ghost, father; we ought to have a ghost," "To be sure," said I, "you are right; there ought to be a ghost." My wife observed that if I persisted in the roast beef idea, and allowed the children to eat plenty of it before going to bed, she was confident there would be no lack of ghosts for them during the night. But my wife is so prosiac: she did not agree with me that it was necessary to have a large piece of roast beef for the look for the thing, even if it proved too hard to eat. Happily, any disagreement on the point was averted by a present of a fine turkey on the afternoon of the Christmas Eve.

While the bird, with legs and wings secured, was lying in my office, I regarded it with delight: thoughts flitted through my brain of sending down to the town for more nuts and oranges, in order that I might make my appearance at home in true Christmas style with a turkey under one arm and a bag of fruit under the other, informing the children that I had just been over to Leadenhall Market. However, having been sufficiently long in the East to observe that if only going from one office to another with, say, a couple of minute papers, it is customary to have a peon to carry them, I thought it would hardly comport with my dignity to be seen struggling home under such a load: the temptation therefore was resisted.

On arriving home after office it was evident that coming events were casting their shadows before. The elder boys, with a zeal that I tried to appreciate, had effectually spoiled all the crotons near the house in order to obtain evergreens for decorating the pictures, while the younger ones were making the air redolent with oranges. Now, I have a strong aversion to the smell of oranges: I can eat an orange, and enjoy it, but when I am not partaking I object to the odour. Still, I am a great stickler for playing the

game properly; and Christmas without oranges would be no Christmas for me. So, strange as it may seem, the perfume of the oranges and the torn branches of croton were welcome, and made me feel, despite the heat, that it really was Christmas. My eldest boy was evidently imbued with the same feelings; for as a resting-place was found for the last scrap of croton, and as I sank into a long chair exhausted and bathed in perspiration, he said, "Now we ought to all sit around a big fire and tell tales!" My wife almost fainted at the thought; and I could only murmur, "Ah, my dear boy, don't try your poor old father too far." A compromise was effected by my reading "Jarley's Ghost" to the children, and shortly afterwards they were put to bed.

It was evident that my son and I were en rapport about the proper observance of Yuletide, for when my wife suggested that we might shut the doors and retire, I rather astonished her by saying, "Certainly, but first I must have some hot grog." "Hot grog ?" said she, aghast. "Yes, my dear; I've always had hot grog on Christmas Eve, and it's a custom" — "More honoured in the breach than the observance," interrupted my better half. "I should not like to lapse," I continued. So I called for hot water; and if I had asked to have another dinner cooked it could not have caused a greater commotion in the cook-house than did this simple request for a jug of boiling water at 10.30 P.M. At length it came. But many difficulties are encountered when trying to do the thing properly out here. "Now for sugar and lemon," said I. The elder Weller laid down a dictum of "two lumps to the tumbler," but I had to put up with moist sugar; as for lemons, there wasn't even a lime in the house, only oranges, and when I regretted the appearance of the steaming jorum minus the customed slice of lemon, the suggestion that a slice of orange might do was not acted on. With every desire to carry out any idea emanating from that quarter, I felt that this was too much, so finished my grog and went to bed.

I can't say how long I had been sleeping when I awoke with an uneasy, startled feeling. I hadn't been dreaming; my wife was sleeping soundly, undisturbed; but I felt convinced that some strange noise had roused me. I listened intently, but everything was quiet, and, thinking I must have been mistaken, was just dozing off, when an agonising wail broke out on the stillness of the night: not a distant sound, not even outside, but, to my startled fancy, right in my ear. There was no mistake this time. I jumped out of bed like a shot, and in doing so aroused my wife; that she had not heard the sound was evident, for upon my describing it, and saying it sounded to me something like Uncle William's voice (an aged relative, since dead, with whom some difference had existed), I was told not to be ridiculous, and that I must have been very stupid to have had hot grog before going to bed. At this I felt justly indignant, and said that the state of my nerves was such that I contemplated cold grog. However, I went back to bed, but so impressed was I with the idea that the sound came from there that I found myself gazing curiously round the top and corners of the mosquito curtain. While lying trying to account for this disturbing noise, it came again; this time with a muffled, fainter sound, but still very near. I turned to my wife with a hushed "There ! that's in the room." Now it is a remarkable thing that my wife and I never agree on the direction of sound: so I was not a bit suprised when she said, "It sounded to me a long way off."

It was useless to endeavour to sleep with this mystery unsolved, so I lit a pipe and had a walk about. A long, painful wail sounding through the house

had the effect of bringing my wife out to me in the sitting-room, looking less confident, but still under the impression it came from the outside, while I felt equally sure it was inside. Well, I decided to walk round the house. It was pitch dark and drizzling, I hadn't a lantern and I couldn't take a lamp. I was always ready to plead guilty to a fair share of imagination, but I never knew how vivid it really was until I was walking round the house that night, or rather early morning. "Well," said I, entering the house, after having made its circuit, "this is a pretty how d'do; we shall feel very fit for Christmas. It will be a long time before I forget this one." "Isn't this," asked my wife, "what you call playing the game. I'm sure I heard you promise the boys a ghost." I thought this last remark altogether uncalled for: and said that, according to the poet, this was not the tone to assume "when pain and anguish," etc.

Well, we retired, and if the ghost howled again I didn't hear it: worn-out nature, assisted by grog, was too potent. I slept.

On going outside the next morning my attention was attracted by a Chinese boy tugging away at a string that ran under the house. His efforts to detach it were unavailing, so he proceeded to squeeze himself through a narrow ventilation opening that ran under my bed-room. I was curious, so went to see what he was doing. I hadn't long to wait, for soon I saw him forcing out — the turkey!

Yes; there was "my ghost." The boy the previous night had secured it with a very long line. It had gone under my bed-room, got the string entangled round a pier, round its wings, even round its neck: and when brought out was apparently lifeless. The flooring under the bed was defective, and the bird had struggled to this hole and there delivered its "dying song." It was found just in time to save its life by cutting its head off.

I was relieved in my mind by finding out the cause of the disturbance, and promptly changed the subject when my wife began to slily refer to "Uncle William." "At any rate," said she "I was quite right in saying it was outside." This, however, has since proved a debatable point, for I still maintain it was inside.

"Now, boys," said I, that Christmas night, "you must all admit that we have, if your mother will allow me to use the expression, 'played the game' properly this Christmas ?"

"All except the ghost, father," cried Master Sharpshins.

"Oh, we had the ghost," said their mother; "but your father kept that all to himself."

"Yes," added I, reflectively, " it certainly was 'My Ghost.'"

CAXTONIAN.

Disaster

13

By the end of 1892, it was clear that George Russell, whose fourteenth birthday had been in November, was outgrowing the teaching available at Mrs Hurst's school. European children of George's age were usually dispatched either to Europe or to Singapore for the final years of their education. However, simply on the grounds of expense, the Russells could not send George to a boarding school in England; it was therefore decided that he should attend Raffles School in Singapore, where he would be boarded in one of the school's residential 'houses'.

The excitement in the family, as preparations were made for George's departure, may well be imagined. It was arranged that Frances would accompany him, in order to complete the formalities for his admission and buy the necessary school uniforms, which were available only in Singapore. Little Robert, now three years old, would also go with his mother.

The days before Mrs Russell's departure also witnessed an upheaval of a different kind. Ernest Birch, who had been Acting Resident, was to be transferred to Perak as State Secretary, while W.H. Treacher C.M.G. would become the substantive British Resident, Selangor.

During the eight months of his stewardship, Birch and his wife had become immensely popular with all communities, and it was with genuine regret that Kuala Lumpur prepared for their departure.

Against the background of these rather unsettling changes, on Tuesday, 10th January 1893, at 3.15 p.m. John, Frances, George, and Robert boarded the train for Port Klang. It is likely that John had permission to see his wife and children safely on their way. Arriving at Klang at 4.15, they were in good time to go aboard the *Sappho*, which was due to sail at 5.30 p.m. They would have been cordially received by Captain Wahl — whom they had last seen at the Christmas Fancy Dress Ball dressed as a Chef! At sailing-time, John and Frances parted at the top of the gangway, John perhaps giving his wife a polite kiss on the cheek before going ashore.

With the memory of her first experience of the *Sappho* still fresh in her mind, Frances was now well prepared for this voyage, having packed mosquito netting, anti-insect ointment and reserves of food.

On the following evening, after enduring the heat of a typical *Sappho* day, Frances and the two children were given a most friendly welcome by Mrs. Basagoili, who had been notified of their coming.

In Kuala Lumpur, on that same Wednesday evening, John Russell attended a farewell party for Ernest Birch given by the leaders of the Chinese and Tamil communities. The British had already held a convivial 'send off' event at the Selangor Club on the previous Saturday. This combined function was given

by the Capitan China, Tambusamy Pillai, and Towkay Loke Yew. The following extracts are taken from John Russell's account of this party:

> *'. . . The eatables, the drinkables and the smokeables were only outvied by the speechables; but in justice to the hosts of the evening it must be admitted that the abundance of the former gave a brilliancy and zest to the latter. We wish we could give all those speeches, and tell how the health of Mr & Mrs Birch . . . was drunk with enthusiasm; how Mr Birch responded in 'suitable terms'; . . . and how success to the 'Selangor Journal' was drunk . . .'*
>
> *'Alas ! every evening, however brimful of enjoyment, comes to an end, and 'Auld Lang Syne' and 'God Save the Queen,' both given with a power that was simply appalling, and cheers for the hosts, brought to a close a night that will be long remembered in Kuala Lumpur.'*

Ernest Birch left Kuala Lumpur on Friday, 13th January 1893.

With the first term of the new school year due to begin on the following Monday, Frances had only Thursday, Friday and Saturday in which to complete George's admission procedures, buy his school uniforms and sports outfits, besides seeing him properly installed in Raffles School's St. Andrew's House in Armenian Street — three exhausting days.

Leaving George at his school 'house' had also been rather harrowing for Frances. Although his new housemaster had been friendly, it had still been a wrench to see George's box being placed beside his bed in the dormitory.

Sundays in the Russell family had always been spent quietly, mostly at home, but with at least one walk to church when the children were dressed in their neatest clothes, with their parents in formal attire. Writing letters to relatives and friends was an additional Sunday occupation: unhindered by the busy affairs of the week.

It was possibly on that Sunday of 15th January 1893, that Frances wrote an undated letter to Archibald, or 'Archie', aged ten, and now the eldest of her sons left in Kuala Lumpur.

In the late afternoon, Frances and Robert joined a few fellow boarders for a visit to the MacRitchie Reservoir - a favourite Sunday outing in Singapore. This was perhaps one of the places which Frances and the family had seen during their initial days in Singapore, or this may have been her first visit. It being a fine evening, the party probably travelled in an open carriage, rather than in a conventional gharry.

The Reservoir lay in the hills off the Thomson Road, and was widely recognized as one of the best scenic viewing-points on the island. In some places the road was narrow and quite steep: their horse, however, had no difficulty in reaching the high banks of the man-made lake where the passengers alighted.

The scenery was magnificent, and although the height was modest, the air was noticeably cooler than in the town. A walk along the banks of the Reservoir

was evidently a popular recreation for Singaporeans, as the number of waiting carriages testified.

After this pleasantly refreshing interlude, Frances and her companions decided to return to Barganny Lodge before sunset, and at six o'clock they climbed into their carriage for the homeward trip. It is not known how the passengers were distributed inside this vehicle, but it is certain that three-year-old Robert sat next to his mother.

Descending a steep hill required special skill on the coachman's part: applying the brakes, he also restrained the horse by pulling on the bit. On this occasion, however, something went wrong, and the animal rebelled. Suddenly, either breaking its reins, or tearing them from the coachman's grasp, the horse bolted down the hill — the carriage bouncing high into the air behind it. Brakes were useless: sparks flew from the iron rims of the wheels, but even if the wheels had locked, there was a danger of the vehicle disintegrating.

The carriage was now totally out of control, hurtling down the narrow lane and heading straight for another coach not far in front. With the entire framework shaking violently, it seemed certain that a disastrous collapse was unavoidable. Everyone knew that fatal traffic accidents were common occurrences in Singapore.

The rasping shriek of the brakes mingled with the screams of women and the shouts of men, creating an air of panic. In this frightening situation, although doing her best to keep calm, Frances knew that the danger was very real, and she was determined that Robert must be saved — whatever the cost. Clutching the boy tightly in her arms, she leapt from the carriage . . .

Amazingly, the horse ceased its crazy galloping before reaching the other vehicle, and was soon again under control. Meanwhile, Frances and Robert lay unconscious on the roadside.

A crowd gathered rapidly, and there was no lack of helpers as the insensible mother and child were transported back to Barganny Lodge, where a doctor was urgently summoned. He swiftly concluded that Robert's head injury was not critical: in fact, the boy soon recovered consciousness. Frances, however, was suffering from severe concussion, and remained in a coma.

On Monday, 16th January 1893, the *Singapore Free Press* reported these events:

> *'A serious carriage accident occurred last evening by which a lady and her infant child were severely injured. A party of ladies and gentlemen after having been on a visit to the Impounding Reservoir, were on the return journey about six o'clock when one of the horses bolted and one of the occupants, a lady named Mrs. Russell, from Kuala Lumpur, in her alarm jumped from the vehicle with her infant in her arms, the result being that both are now suffering from concussion of the brain. The runaway horse stopped immediately on reaching the next carriage in front, and fortunately no further accident occurred. It is expected that the infant, not being very*

seriously hurt, will speedily recover, but the case of Mrs. Russell is reported to be much more grave.'

Frances Russell died in Barganny Lodge on the morning of Tuesday, 17th January 1893, without regaining consciousness. She was thirty-four when she died. A telegram bearing the tragic news was dispatched to Kuala Lumpur.

In those days, private telegrams were seldom used except for fatalities of this kind, and it is likely that the one which John Russell received late on Tuesday morning, or early that afternoon, was his first news of the accident. In a state of shock, and without notifying anyone in authority, John caught the afternoon train to Klang, and sailed on the *Sappho* that evening — just a week after he had said good-bye to Frances.

John was now expected in Singapore, and the funeral was delayed pending his arrival. With Wahl's help, John sent his own grim telegram to his wife's sister in London.

The *Straits Times* of Wednesday 18th January, printed the following report:

'A sad accident occurred on Sunday afternoon which terminated in the death of Mrs. Russell, yesterday. Mrs. Russell, who is the wife of the Government Printer at Selangor, came to Singapore in order to make arrangements for the schooling of two (sic) *of her children. She went out for a drive to the Waterworks, Thomson Road, on Sunday afternoon, with her infant son, and, on returning, the horse bolted. It is said that Mrs. Russell with her infant leaped from the carriage, and both were rendered unconscious. There were taken to Barganny Lodge where Mrs. Russell was staying, and professional advice was called in which showed that both lady and child were suffering from concussion of the brain. The infant has apparently recovered, but Mrs. Russell died yesterday morning. The husband was at once telegraphed for; and the last rites were deferred . . . so that Mr. Russell might possibly have an opportunity of being present.'*

According to the Register of Burials, Frances Russell was buried in the Christian Cemetery, Bukit Timah Road, Singapore, on Thursday, 19th January 1893. The cause of death was recorded as 'concussion of the brain'. Besides John Russell himself, his eldest son George, the school-boy, probably attended the funeral.

After the interment, on his return to Barganny Lodge, John had the sorrowful task of going through the few possessions which his wife had brought to Singapore. It is likely that he also found the undated, unsigned and unposted letter to 'Archie':

'Dear Archie,

I must let you hear from me first and Phil next. I hope you took great care of Father and put on his bib and sent him down to the Club by the kiboon. I will try & get your transfers today, if I cannot get them I must try another day. Goodbye dear, be a good boy and look after things for mother.'

From this note it seems that, in common with other male members, John had formed the habit of going to the Club after the evening meal. He would be escorted by the ***kebun***, carrying a lantern. The 'bib' may have been the lace front of his evening dress — which was ***de rigueur*** in the Club after dark. Playing with coloured transfers was a popular pastime for children.

Although in grief, John nevertheless had to force himself to deal with everyday problems. Naturally, the fate of his five children weighed heavily on his mind.

John decided that George would remain at school in Singapore, while Robert would return with him to Kuala Lumpur. He could only worry about the effect which the news must have had on the other three boys; he had just had time to tell them of their mother's death before leaving for Singapore, being unable to comfort them properly. As for others, he knew that from the moment of the telegram's arrival at the post-office, the grim news would have spread rapidly throughout the British community in Kuala Lumpur. The wider implications of the tragedy came to him only gradually, as he regained his normal composure.

The fact that John had to arrange passages for himself and Robert, leaving on Saturday — only two days after the funeral — possibly had some therapeutic effect. They returned to Kuala Lumpur on Sunday, 23rd January 1893.

The relief and affection with which John was greeted by the three boys in Kuala Lumpur may be imagined. It soon became clear that Archie had set a good example of courage for his younger brothers. Evidently, one of John's first thoughts on his return was to give Archie the letter which his mother had written before her death, and which Archie treasured for the rest of his life.

John probably reported his return to the British Resident on the following morning. Mr Treacher would have expressed his sympathy in few words. Among his colleagues and friends, John found that most of them showed their regret through a sympathetic handshake, with a minimum of comment.

Some of his most affecting moments probably came from his own staff, who would grip both his hands and touch his clothing in a genuine desire to share his sorrow. However, not wishing to distress them unnecessarily, John would do his best to behave as normally as possible, without allowing his inward feelings to intrude into officialdom.

It was sadly ironic that the *Journal* issued on 17th January 1893, five days after John's return from Singapore, should contain the following entry:

DEPARTURES

'Jan. 10th, per s.s. Sappho *to Singapore:*
Mrs. Russell and two children...'

The same edition also recorded John's departure for Singapore on 17th January.

John's public behaviour belied the fact that his mind was in an understandable state of turmoil. With five young children, now bereft of maternal care, he must decide on the family's future.

It was apparent that, without Frances, John's household would almost inevitably deteriorate. Who could order the food, and plan a healthy diet? Who could ensure that routines were enforced? Who could apply remedies for minor ailments? Who could correct the boys' spoken and written English? Who could teach them English manners? Who could supervise the washing and ironing of clothes? Who could check that beds, floors and rooms were thoroughly clean? Who could keep an honest account of household expenditure? In short, who could replace a loving wife and mother?

In all his thoughts, John's primary concern was that the boys should have an English education — a large part of which depended on an English-speaking home life. The prospect of a remarriage in Malaya could be ruled out: there were virtually no single European women in the country. Besides, what lady of any age would wish to be the stepmother of five young boys? Alternatively, marriage to a local girl who spoke limited English — and there were few schools of any kind for local girls — would be no better than employing another *amah*.

Having juggled with these disturbing thoughts for several days, John concluded that the only solution to the problem would be to send the four younger boys back to England where there was almost free education, and where they could live with an English family. Looking to the future, he realized that he could never afford to send them all to Raffles School, which was proving to be more expensive than he had imagined.

Unfortunately, he was unable to afford the boys' passage to England. At this point, John no doubt looked again at the terms of his contract. His probationary three years of service would end in March, and he was confident that he would be granted permanent establishment. However, there was no provision for homeward passages for his family, except in the circumstances set out in paragraph 5 of his Agreement:

> *'The Government shall furnish the said John Russell with free second class passages to Singapore for himself and his family and with return passages at the expiration of the said term of Three years if his services are then dispensed with and provided his conduct shall have been satisfactory during his engagement and that he leaves for England within two months from the termination of his engagement.'*

So, provided the Government 'dispensed with' his services, John and the children would be entitled to free passages. John realized that if the Government agreed to pay the passages for four of his children, without dispensing with his services, an exception would have to be made to his Agreement. He also knew that 'making an exception' in the Civil Service was equivalent to 'setting a precedent': an anathema from the Colonial Office downwards.

Undaunted, eight days after his return from Singapore, John sent the following letter to the Government Secretary, Selangor:

Govt. Printing Office,
Kuala Lumpur.

Sir,

I have the honour to ask that the following application may be laid before the Resident. The recent death of my wife renders it necessary that a portion of my family should return to Europe, and I would ask that the passage of my four younger children be defrayed by Government - they are aged, respectively, three, five, eight and ten years.

2. I do not base this application on any precedent, but I hope that it may be regarded as an exceptional case: and I am fully aware that it was only in the event of my resigning my appointment at the termination of my agreement (which is dated 6th. Jan., 1890) that the Government agreed to pay the return passage to England of myself and family, but under the circumstances I venture to hope that my application may receive favourable consideration.

I have the honour to be
Sir,
your most obdt. servt.
John Russell
Govt. Printer.

Because of the expenditure involved, it is likely that this application would have been referred to Singapore for the attention of the Colonial Secretary, the formidable William Maxwell; even authorities in London might have to be consulted. John, therefore, did not expect an early reply.

Although he was usually scrupulous in observing regulations, it was not until 6th February that John remembered to report the unauthorised leave he had taken to attend his wife's funeral. There were apparently no repercussions for this lapse.

Another conventional reminder of Frances' death came when John was preparing the *Journal* for 10th February 1893. This contained the magazine's first reference to the tragedy. From the beginning, John had standardized the form of these sad Notices. He made no exception:

DEATHS

RUSSELL - At Singapore, on 17th January,
Frances Sophia, aged 34, wife of John Russell,
of Kuala Lumpur. Deeply regretted.'

In the same issue, John's return with Robert on 22nd January was also recorded. John had obviously been too distraught to have the Notice of his wife's death published in the *Journal* of 27th January.

Existing records apparently do not contain the official reply to John's application of 30th January, but an exception was evidently made, and

Government passages for the boys were approved. No doubt Maxwell's high regard for John's work helped to secure this result.

John was still faced with the difficulty of finding a suitable home for his children in England. With no sisters or brothers, nor any close relatives of his own, he wrote to his late wife's sister asking for her help, although he knew that she had two children of her own. John would have stressed that he would pay a reasonable sum for the boys' upkeep each month.

None of this private correspondence appears to have survived. However, probably after some negotiation, 'Auntie Nell and Uncle George' eventually agreed to accommodate the four Russell boys. These arrangements took a few months to bring to fruition. In the meantime, John derived great comfort from his well-behaved and intelligent children. With Archie's help, he checked their clothing and homework each morning before they went to school. He also made sure that they ate a substantial breakfast. Mrs Hurth probably found a place in her kindergarden for three-year-old Robert.

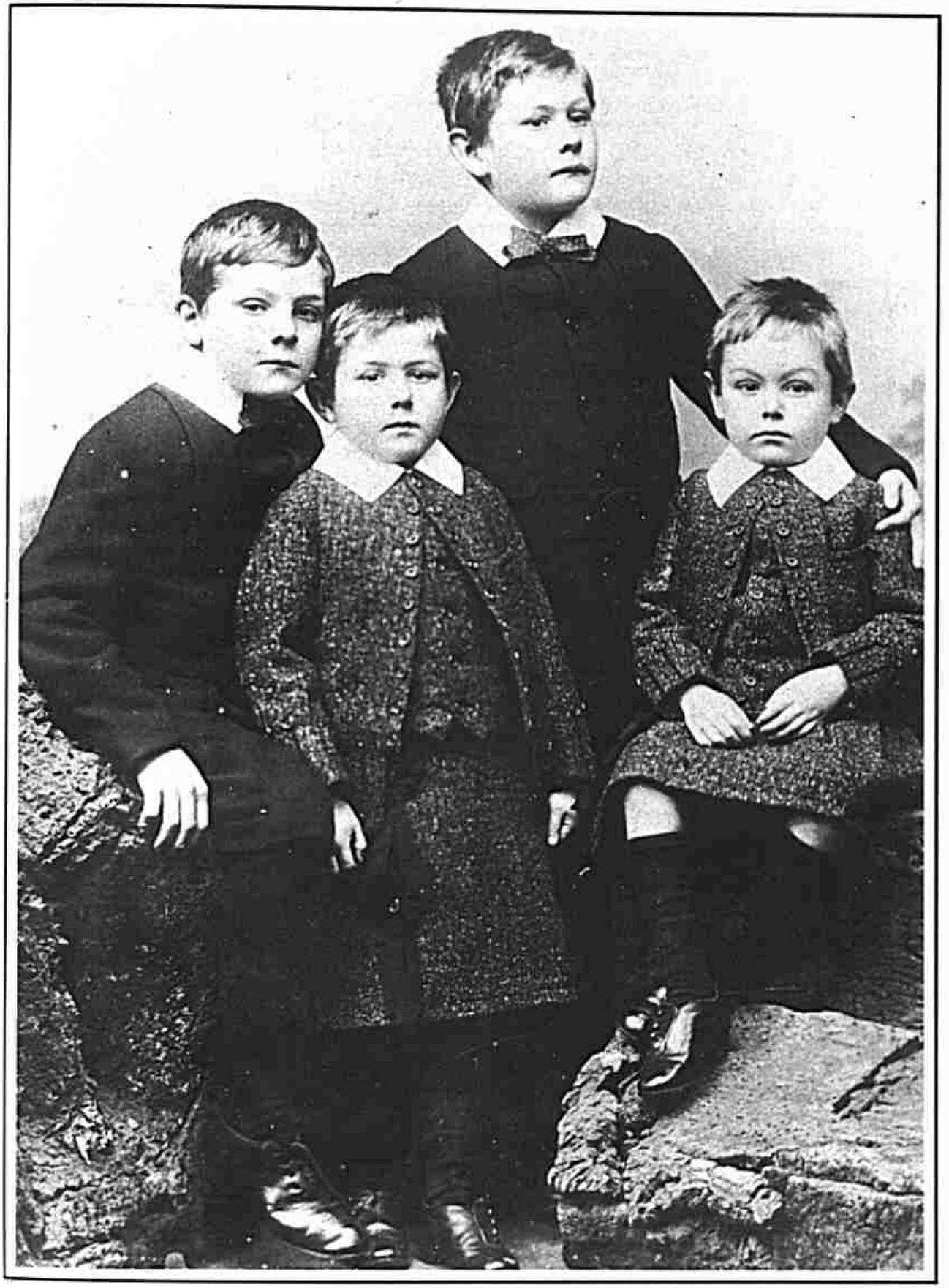
In the evenings, on his return from the office, John made sure that they had completed their afternoon homework, and would often read to them before they went to bed. He took great pride in his sons, and found strength in their bright companionship.

In April 1893, however, John applied for four days' leave in Singapore on what was clearly family business. During this trip, he probably arranged with the Government Secretariat for the boys' cabin on a suitable ship leaving sometime in June or early July, 1893. He was touched by the number of Singaporeans who offered to accommodate the boys before their departure, and to purchase warm clothing. The Secretariat helped to find someone who would keep an eye on the boys during the voyage.

Eventually, to relieve the boys of the gloom of the Kuala Lumpur house during his working hours, John Russell accepted the invitation of a kind Singapore family, and allowed them to stay on the island for more than a month before their ship sailed for England in mid-June.

The day of the boys' departure from Selangor came only too soon. After all the necessary arrangements had been made, John accompanied his children to Port Klang, consigning them to the friendly care of Captain Wahl. John no doubt made a great effort to be particularly cheerful that day, but it must have been a distressing sight to see the boys waving good-bye from the *Sappho's* rails, with Archie keeping a firm hold on the smallest member of the family.

Four of the Russell boys at school in London. 'Archie' (standing) has a protective arm around Robert. On the left is Philip with Donald.



14 Separation.

After the departure of his children, John realized that it would be unnecessarily expensive to live alone, and he readily agreed to share a house with his friend Charles Paxon. John later described this as 'the highest house in Kuala Lumpur'. He also agreed to surrender his official quarters:

Government Printing Office,
Kuala Lumpur,
13th. May, 1893.

Subject: Govt. Printer reports vacating his quarters for Mr Vane to occupy.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that I have handed over the keys of my quarters to the P.W.D., in order that Mr. Vane may occupy them.

2. May I ask, in view of my again wanting a house, that it be placed on record that the fact of my obliging Mr. Vane does not nullify the order given in K.L. 8545-92, where these quarters are set apart for the Govt. Printer.

I have the honour to be
Sir
Your most obdt servt
J.Russell
Govt. Printer.

Mr H.G.B. Vane was a senior government Auditor with a wife and children.

Still suffering from the loss of his household and family, John's spirits may have been somewhat restored by a most enjoyable party given by Mr and Mrs Treacher to celebrate Queen Victoria's seventy-fourth birthday on 31st May 1893. The following are extracts from the *Journal's* report, which was probably written by John himself:

Dancing commenced at about half past nine and was kept up till twelve, when an adjournment to the supper room took place, and Mrs. Treacher's excellent arrangement of tables was so satisfactory that about 100 people sat down at once without the least crowding or inconvenience.

The principal table, on which there were large blocks of ice to cool the air and stimulate jaded appetites by their refreshing appearance, was arranged under the punkah . . .

Ample justice was done to the excellent supper, and after Her Majesty's health had been proposed by the Resident, and received with the usual

honours, dancing recommenced and was carried on till after 3 a.m. when the company dispersed. The ball was a most delightful one, and Mrs. Treacher may be congratulated on her first dance in Selangor having proved such a success.

Diversion of a different kind was provided at the Selangor Club on 21st July 1893, when two professional entertainers, the Fletchers, under the patronage of the Resident, gave a song and dance performance. The *Journal* reported:

The Fletchers were assisted by that local favourite Mr. Steve Harper, who sang two comic songs and danced a step-dance in his well-known humourous style, and whose appearance on the stage was greeted with that applause it always calls forth . . .

Steve Harper, a police Inspector, and one of four brothers in Kuala Lumpur, had always been especially admired by George, John Russell's eldest boy. When George was at school in Singapore, Steve Harper generously sent him a banjo for his birthday.

Charles Paxon and John Russell, were among the most hard-working government officers in Kuala Lumpur. None the less, off duty, they enjoyed taking part in Selangor Club and Masonic Lodge activities, to which they made positive contributions. Paxon had been made Treasurer of Read Lodge, where John was already a Junior Warden — his first step up the ladder of Masonry. In September 1893, John was elected to the main Committee of the Selangor Club, whilst Charles was elected to the Cricket Committee. Both men were deservedly popular, being quiet, sensible and dependable, yet blessed with good humour.

It was not until the beginning of September that John received the first letter from his children in England. This letter had been written by Archie, the eldest, and enclosed a missive from Donald Oscar, then just six years old. John wrote an immediate reply:

Kuala Lumpur
9th. Sept 1893

My Dear Archie,

I was very glad to hear of your safe arrival in England, and I hope to get a letter from you telling me all about the voyage, and how you are getting on at school. You have plenty to do, of course, because I am sure you help your Auntie in looking after your brothers, and I am sure also that you try to give her as little trouble as you can. You are the eldest at home, you know, so Auntie naturally looks to you for assistance.

When I heard that you were going to school, I wondered whether you had astonished your teacher with geography, or if you had forgotten it.

I saw your old teacher, Mrs Hurth, the other day & she enquired very kindly about you all, and wondered when she would again see you.

George came to K. Lumpur for his holidays, and so did the little Leaches and little Kemp: you remember them?

I am now living at Mr. Paxon's house, you know where they were building it, just behind the Residency. It is the highest house in Kuala Lumpur, and we have had the jungle cleared and can see all over the country.

The additions and alterations to my office are nearly completed, and I am now writing this letter in my new room, and a very nice one it is, it looks right into the garden of our old house; sometimes, when I look out of the window at the house and the garden, I feel very sad indeed; but when I think of my little boys in England, and think how proud and happy I shall be as they grow up good boys, I cheer up.

Good-by, dear Archie, for the present

Your loving Father.'

John also enclosed a reply to Donald:

'My Dear Don,

I was very glad to get your letter, and it took me some time to get through all the kisses you sent. To do this I went out into the jungle: when Mr. Paxon, to my great astonishment, said, "Go away to that tree, you will die, you will die!" I thought I had heard something like this before, but was not quite certain: Perhaps you had better ask Phil if ever he heard anything like this.'

This must have been a family joke, known to Mr. Paxon.

'I saw Jennie & George Smart the other day, & they both asked me "Wherever Airchee & Donald ?" I told them that they were both in England; and then they said "Eh, noo, air they."

'I was very glad to hear that my Don was going to school, and I hope he will be as good a boy in England as he was in Kuala Lumpur: and do all that Auntie tells him: and above all look after his little brother Bob.

Now you must get someone to give you a number of kisses and hugs & to take them as coming from

Your loving Father.

Mr Paxon sends his love.'

On the day before writing these acknowledgements, John had published Number 26 of the *Journal*, the last of Volume I. He had good reason to be satisfied, but he contented himself with a modest reference in Notes and News:

'. . . we do not think our most captious critic can gainsay the fact that, but for the existence of the Journal *the record of some current events, and the publication of some readable articles might have been lost. At any rate, if*

contributors will accord to Vol.II. the same support that they have given to Vol.I. there will be little cause for grumbling . . .'

It was not merely the record of 'current events', and the inclusion of 'readable articles' which gave the *Journal* its character: it illuminated the everyday life of a multi-racial community at a time of great progress and development. There was nothing high-falutin' about the *Journal*: it could be read by senior and junior subscribers with equal pleasure.

Apart from stalwarts like Dr. Travers, Harry Syers, and John Russell himself, one of the most reliable contributors was a young District Officer, J.H.M. Robson, who combined a natural talent for good writing with a keen interest in Malayan affairs.

Ever since his boys had left for England, John Russell had made a point of sending them the fortnightly edition of the *Journal*.

At the beginning of October 1893, John began a series of what he intended to be weekly letters:

'My Dear Archie, *6th. October, 1893.*

As you are the eldest, I will give you the first letter; and next week I will write to Phil and so on.

If you were in Kuala Lumpur just now you would think it was the Chinese New Year again, but it is a festival which is celebrated every seven years; each night the town is illuminated with strings of Chinese lanterns, and each day a procession marches thro' the town; you will read a short description of it in the Journal of to-day. There is plenty of Chinese music, you know what that is like, and plenty of cracker firing, and to-night outside the Club, there will be a grand display of fire-works. I expect you will receive this letter just about the time that fireworks are plentiful in London, that is, the 5th. of November.

*You will be glad to hear that Mr. Hone is back again in Kuala Lumpur; and, in the "*Journal*" you will get this week, another friend of yours is mentioned in an article "Tiger Shooting of a Sort", the "Mr D", being Mr. Dalglish. The Messrs. Harper are quite well. Mr Paxon send his love to all of you. Mr. Paxon has taken a photo of our house, and when he has developed it he will give me one to send to Auntie Nell; I have also bought some views of Kuala Lumpur, and George is going to have his photo taken. One of these days Auntie will have a group taken of you all at Home, that will be grand. I hear that Georgie is up for his examination for passing to the highest standard, I hope he will be successful; perhaps I shall be able to say in my next letter.*

You must read this letter to your brothers and be careful that little Bobbie and Donald understand it all; Phil is sure to.

Give my love to Ernie and Katie and to my dear little boys, and tell them I am very glad to get their letters.

Your loving Father.

The postmarks on the envelope of this letter show that it was posted in Kuala Lumpur on 7th October 1893, postmarked again in Singapore on 9th October, and in Peckham on 3rd November 1893 - less than a month in transit.

The festival mentioned in this letter, of which a full account appears in the *Journal*, was the Chinese festival of Sz Ya. It included a procession 'which took nearly an hour and a half to pass the Selangor Club'.

Mr Hone, a businessman, was evidently a family friend. Mr Dalglish, a junior engineer, had befriended the Russell boys. He was then working on road construction in the Rawang area, about 10 miles north of Kuala Lumpur, where a tiger had bitten the hand of a Chinese labourer. Dalglish and his senior engineer tried to entice the tiger from the jungle by means of a live goat which they used as bait. In the course of a nerve-racking vigil in total darkness, they merely succeeded in terrifying themselves. The tiger had apparently moved on.

'Messrs. Harper' refers to the four Harper brothers, all of whom the boys knew: Steve Harper being a special friend.

At this time Archie Russell also received a letter from his brother George at Raffles School in Singapore:

St. Andrews House,
Armenian Str.
Singapore
Straits Settlements

12/10/93.

Dear Arch,

I am glad to hear that you are quite well. I have received your letter. I hope you will get on well in the sports, and win some prize. To-day next month is your birthday, and I wish you many happy returns of the day. My birthday is on the 23 of November. Father is quite well, and so am I. How are you getting on at school, I hope you will do well.

Mr Steve Harper has given me a banjo and I am teaching myself to play. How are Don and Phil & Bob.

We are having a play this year called the "Talisman". I am the principal actor in it. I will send you a programme when I get one. I am your loving

Brother

George Russell.

This is followed by a drawing of a schooner named 'ARCH', and 'MANY HAPPY RETURNS of the "DAY"

G.D.R.'

According to his birth certificate Archie was born on 11th November 1882. In a later letter George asked for an accurate list of birthdays!

In his Notes and News of the *Journal* issued on 3rd November 1893, John Russell gives a lively account of a strike by lightning:

> *Just as we were about to leave the office last evening, after preparing the Journal for the press, and stood waiting for the rain to cease, we were eye-witnesses of a remarkable spectacle: a vivid electric flash and a terrific explosion occurred within a few yards of where we were standing at the door of the Printing Office, and the electric fluid seemed to bury itself in the ground at a spot just opposite, from which smoke arose. We immediately ran out and at once saw that the Government Offices had been struck by lightning, the tall flagstaff in front presenting a strange appearance, being splintered from top to bottom, the upper part, as someone remarked, looking just like a besom. At the foot of the staff was lying a Chinaman, apparently dead; upon Mr. Brown lifting him, however, he was found to be alive, but with an ugly wound in his face, probably caused by the fall when the shock stunned him; he was immediately carried off to the hospital as was also a Kling who was standing on the portico when the lightning struck him. The Government Offices suffered considerable damage, and as several people were still within the building, it is cause for congratulation that nothing worse occurred . . .'*

Both the injured men later recovered. Mr. J. Brown was John Russell's newly appointed English assistant. At that time, the terms 'Chinaman' for a Chinese, and 'Kling' for a Tamil, were in common use. Later, they were regarded as derogatory and fell into disuse.

Since its constitution on 21st October 1889, members of Read Lodge had met in a shop-house at No. 6, Clarke Street. During 1893, however, a company had been formed from among the members to erect a proper building for Lodge activities, and a suitable site was purchased on the Damansara Road, not far from the recently re-sited railway station. On 6th November 1893, the foundation stone for the new building was laid by Sir Charles Warren, the current District Grand Master of Freemasonry.

The laying of this foundation stone involved an elaborate ceremony at which prayers were said by the Reverend F.W. Haines, who was the local Church of England chaplain. A bottle was placed in a recess of the foundation stone itself, containing a scroll with the names of all those who had assisted in the ceremony and a brief history of Read Lodge. The bottle also contained the various coins current in the State — viz., a Mexican silver dollar, a Japanese dollar, a 50 cent piece, a 20 cent piece, a 10 cent piece, a 5 cent piece, a copper cent, 1/2 cent and 1/4 cent. A copy of the Selangor *Journal* of 3rd November 1893 was also enclosed.

On the night of the stone laying, a Masonic Dance was given at the Selangor Club, 'the Brethren appearing in Masonic clothing'. As Senior Warden of the Lodge, and next in line for the position of Master, John Russell played a large part in organizing these celebrations.

George Russell's fourteenth birthday was on 23rd November 1893. He wrote to Archie from his school in Singapore:

Dear Arch,

I have this morning just received your letter, together with Phil's and Aunt Nell's. Today is my birthday and I have just received the letters from you all, they have arrived on the very day. Cissie Stutter sent me a necktie pin & father sent me a neckie. I am 14 years old. Did you have a nice birthday. I hope you did. I was unable to send you a card, because I had no money at the time. How is aunt, please write to me. What standard are you in school. I have not had a cake given to me this birthday. What class is Phil in. Give my love to Phil, Don & Bob.

Aunt tells me in her letter that Bob has had a fall. I hope he has not hurt himself much.

With love to Aunt, Uncle, Ernest and Katie, I remain

Your loving brother

George Russell.

P.S. I think that I may get a prize this year.

(The letter ends with a drawing of St. Andrew's House Flag.)

Cissie Stutter's identity is unknown: she was obviously a friend of the family. Ernest and Katie were Aunt Nell's children.

On 14th December 1893, William Maxwell, Colonial Secretary, but now Acting Governor, paid an official visit to Kuala Lumpur. He was shortly to be superseded by a new Governor, Sir Charles Mitchell.

John Russell wrote to Archie on the following day:

15th. Dec 1893.

Mr Dear Archie,

I hope you have had an enjoyable Christmas, and a happy New Year, & that you and your brothers are all in first class condition. In a parcel I have sent home are some views of Kuala Lumpur, you will be able to tell your Uncle and Aunt all about the places and people, and explain to them what I have written on the back of them.

You remember how the Sikhs used to drill and march with the band on Wednesday evenings: well they have not done for a long time, but Mr. Maxwell came to Kuala Lumpur yesterday, and so the Sikhs had a parade outside the Selangor Club, and the band played all the same marches that they used to play when you were all here, its a long time since I heard these tunes, and it made me think of all my dear little boys in England. It was a very hot afternoon, quite broiling, and I thought how pleased you would all be if I could only lift you out of the cold and fog of an English December and pop you down in the brilliant sunshine of

Kuala Lumpur; to run about the Parade Ground and then go into the Club for lemonade. There is a little boy here, named Gibson, whom I often give a lemonade to, because I think how often you used to have it given to you.

George is going to stop at some Estate in Singapore for the Christmas holidays, so I don't suppose I shall see him until the Chinese New Year, early in February: you must tell your cousins all about the Chinese New Year, what a high time the coolies have, & how all the children are dressed up, and what a terrible noise the Chinese make with their musical *instruments and crackers.*

I hope you have got George's photograph all right, I was very glad to have the one that Katie sent me, and hope one day to get a group of my four boys in one picture.

Tell Phil he is, I think, very clever in drawing, and tell Don I shall be glad when he can write to me like you and Phil do: as for my dear little Bob you must all give him a kiss from dada, and all look after him. I expect he is almost as tall as Donald now: in fact, I expect you will all be grown out of knowledge when I see you again.

You must tell me in your next letter about the people you met in Malden, and when you went to see Regie Montague and his brother.

Give my love to Aunt and Uncle and to your cousins, and read this letter to Phil and Donald and Bobbie, and give them all kisses for me: & you must write to me often. Good-bye, my dear old Archie, with love & best wishes, Your affectionate

Father.

Unfortunately, none of Archie's replies to his father's letters has been found, but it is evident that the children were taken to New Malden to visit relatives and family friends. Regie Montague remains unknown.

On 28th December 1893, the British Resident, Mr Treacher sent the following minute to the Government Secretary, Selangor:

G.Sec,

The Govt. Printer has done excellent work & hard work this year & and for a considerable portion of the year was without an assistant.

I understand there are considerable savings on the Estimates of the Department & from these savings $100 can now be paid to the Govt. Printer.

28/12. *WHT.*

The Government Secretary circulated this minute to John Russell, and also to the official Auditor and Treasurer. John recorded his thanks:

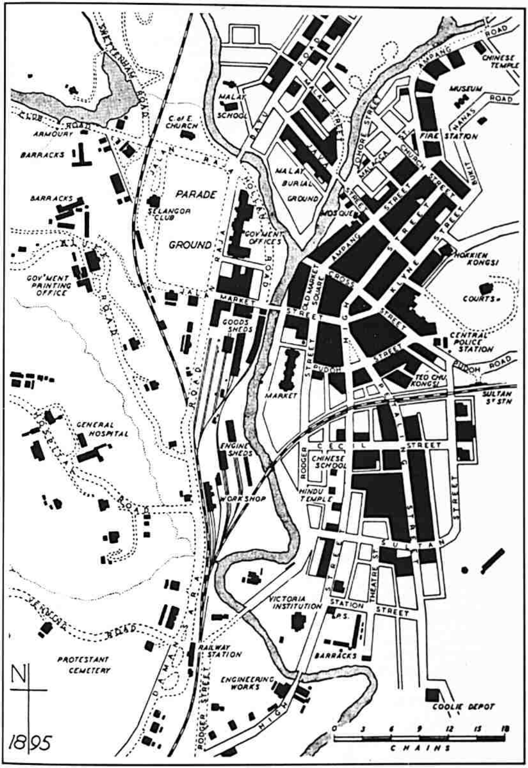
Govt. Sec,

I am exceedingly gratified at the good opinion the Resident has been pleased to express of my services, & am much obliged for the bonus.

29.12. *JR.*

This was an unusual form of reward for a government official; but it was the most convenient way for an appreciative superior to record his satisfaction with the Government Printer, who, as a specialist, could not be given promotion. At least it struck a cheerful chord at the end of John Russell's saddest year.

Kuala Lumpur in 1895. The Government Printing Office is shown on Bluff Road (Top left). The original Railway Station stood where Goods Sheds are marked (Centre).


CLUB ROAD
ARMOURY
BARRACKS
C. of E. CHURCH
MALAY SCHOOL
PARADE
GROUND
SELANGOR CLUB
BARRACKS
GOV'MENT OFFICES
GOV'MENT PRINTING OFFICE
JALAN RAJA
MALAY BURIAL GROUND
MOSQUE
MALAY STREET
JAVA STREET
BATU ROAD
AMPANG
CHINESE TEMPLE
MUSEUM
ROAD
FIRE STATION
CHURCH STREET
JOHORE STREET
MALACCA STREET
BUKIT NANAS
AMPANG STREET
HOKKIEN KONGSI
COURTS
CROSS
OLD MARKET SQUARE
MARKET STREET
KLYNE STREET
HIGH STREET
CENTRAL POLICE STATION
PUDOH ROAD
PUDOH STREET
TEO CHU KONGSI
SULTAN St STN
GOODS SHEDS
MARKET
GENERAL HOSPITAL
HOSPITAL ROAD
ENGINE SHEDS
WORKSHOP
CECIL STREET
ROGGER
CHINESE SCHOOL
HINDU TEMPLE
PETALING STREET
SULTAN STREET
THEATRE ST.
STATION STREET
VICTORIA INSTITUTION
P.S.
BARRACKS
RAILWAY STATION
ENGINEERING WORKS
PROTESTANT CEMETERY
DAMANSARA ROAD
ROGGER STREET
HIGH STREET
COOLIE DEPOT
0 3 6 9 12 15 18
CHAINS
N
1895

15 In Absentia

John Russell wrote to Archie on 20th February 1894:

My Dear Archie,

I should be very glad to get a letter from you every week: but then I ought to write you one each week, too, & that is where I find a difficulty. Your last one was very amusing, indeed: I hope you all had a good time at the Concert, Katie scored a distinct success; and you all clapped away until your hands were sore: Bobbie louder than anyone.

I am very sorry to hear that Auntie is not quite well, and hope, dear Archie, you do all in your power to assist her in looking after your brothers, & causing as little trouble as possible.

I think I told you that Kitchil had gone to China, to spend his new year with his mother and father: I hope to have him back soon, as the "boy" (or rather old man) he has put in his place is a duffer. I told you that Booky was lost, but Mr Paxon has four black cats, & Dolly has four little puppies: one all black, except a little white on its breast; one all white on its breast; one all white, except two black spots on the head, & the other like Dolly herself: she is very proud, indeed: but thinks that anybody who looks at them or walks near her box, wants to steal them; the consequence is that occasionally there is a little row for she "goes for" the syce, the gardener, etc. I have a little monkey, very little, monkey: it had a very long tail, but that has been cut off. When you say "Minta ampun" (ask pardon) she puts up both hands, and if you say "Tumboh", and smack the ground she turns head over heels. I wish I could send her to you in a letter! but I am afraid that, no matter how she was sent, the first cold week in England would kill her.

Mr Dalglish, who used to be at Ampang with Mr Paxon, has now gone to Petaling with Mr Hone (The gentleman who used to call Mr Paxon "Horationes"), so two of your friends are together. Young Mr Maynard is at Kuala Kubu, right up country: he wants me to go on a visit, but I can't manage it at present.

Phil asked me to send him some stamps with the tiger-head on: so I enclose some for you both: if Ernest does not happen to have them among his you must please let him take some. Give my love & kisses to Phil & Don & Bob, to cousins and Aunts and Uncles, and believe me, my dear, Your loving

Father, J.R.

Kitchil: Malay for 'little'; here applied to young house-boy.
Tabek: Malay for 'salute' or 'greetings'.
Tumboh: Malay for 'fall down' or 'collapse'.

'Young Mr Maynard' was evidently someone the boys had known in Kuala Lumpur who was now stationed in Kuala Kubu, about 30 miles from Kuala Lumpur by road.

Until that time, all mail from Selangor had borne Straits settlements stamps. The 'tiger-head' stamps were the first for Selangor.

On the 2nd March 1894, George wrote again to Archie. The letter was addressed to 'Master A. Russell, 135, Chadwich Road, Peckham, London.'

St. Andrews House
Singapore
S.S.

Friday, 2nd. 3.94.

Dear Archie,

The other day I got a letter from father and enclosed was a letter from you to him. I was very pleased to read it and it is a very good letter for you. How are Uncle and Aunt and Phil, Don, Bob and yourself. How are you getting on in school, what class are you in and what sums are you doing.

I am now learning Algebra, Latin, Euclid, Drawing and many other difficult subject. Last year I got first prize in my class. It was a book called "Cassells New Biographical Dictionary" and it is a very useful book.

We have just ended our months Chinese New Year Holidays. I did not go to Selangor for various reasons, but stayed in Singapore for my holiday. During the first week I stayed in Pasir Panjang, in the next two weeks at Mr Buckleys, and for the last week in Johor with Dato Meldrum. I suppose Bobby will soon be going to school.

Archie, will you please send me in your next letter a list of all your birthdays and ages, for I am not quite certain as to when they are. Ask Ernest and Katie to write to me, also Phil.

Next month we will close for Easter when we will get two weeks or ten days. I suppose I shall not get any 'Easter eggs'.

Dear Archie, I must now say goodbye and send my hearty good wishes (for your welfare) in this letter, and I wish that I could come to England soon to speak with you and

I remain

your loving brother

George Russell.

P.S. Please write to me as often as possible. G.R.
Give stamps on this letter to Ernest.

Pasir Panjang was then an attractive fishing village on the south-west coast of Singapore. Dato Meldrum was a prominent Johor planter. The Honour of a Datoship could be awarded only by the Sultan.

Evidently, Ernest already possessed these stamps — they are still on the envelope.

Later in the same month, John Russell wrote again to Archie:

My Dear Arch,

What a splendid letter-writer you are becoming to be sure; I shall have to get you to write some articles for the Journal.

Fortunately none of your friends have met with the sad fate you speak about in your last letter; although I am very grieved to tell you that Dr. Little died suddenly last week. You remember Dr. Little, he put you under chloroform when your toe-nail was cut out.

Mr Hone was staying with us a short time ago, & Mr Dalglish is now working with him, and Mr Paxon, who is very well, is away in Sungei Ujong for the Holidays.

I am very sorry to tell you that George has had fever, I enclose the letter Mr Barker sent me. I have written to Singapore, saying he had better come here for a change as soon as he is able.

Last week I went to Kuala Kubu, on a visit to young Maynard. It is a very pretty place in Ulu Selangor, you will find it on the map I sent. We went for a walk along the Pahang track: the prettiest scenery in the place: it put me in mind of Killiekrankie in Scotland: in fact, it was strikingly like it.

Mr & Mrs Crompton are going on leave, so Percy will no longer be seen about Kuala Lumpur in his red combinations; quite a loss to its picturesqueness.

I am addressing this letter to you, and you must please be my postman with the enclosures.

Tell Auntie, I will sit down to a long letter to her to-morrow; as I am not sure if the mail goes out to-day & don't want to lose it if it does.

Give my love to Auntie and Uncle and all your cousins, & I hope you have a good time with Aunt Sarah.

Your loving father
J.R.

George evidently recovered from his fever, making his journey to Kuala Lumpur unnecessary at that time. Aunt Sarah lived in New Malden, not far from the Russells' old house.

By the middle of 1894, development in Kuala Lumpur was readily apparent. The Parade Ground in front of the Selangor Club was being drained and

returfed, and the old buildings opposite the Club on the Damansara Road were in the process of being demolished to make way for new Government offices. A new Anglican church, St. Mary's, was being erected to the north of the Parade Ground, where the stables of the original club-house had once stood. Mr A.C. Norman, the State Architect, had designed this attractive little church, which replaced a decrepit wooden building near Bluff Road, and was being constructed by Mr Nicholas, a contractor, who was also building the new Masonic Lodge on Damansara Road.

At the same time, new buildings were being erected in High Street for the Victoria Institution, which was to be officially opened before the end of the year.

John Russell had not been exaggerating when he told Archie that he found it difficult to write to him every week. His office was now printing everything for the Selangor State Government, including the *Gazettes*, the fortnightly *Journal*, and, recently, all the printing for the State of Sungei Ujong. In addition, he was now not only a busy member of the Selangor Club Committee, and Senior Warden of Read Lodge, but he had also been appointed a member of the government's Musuem Committee, and of the Public Gardens Committee, which was responsible for the management of the Lake Gardens. In his letters to the children, however, he scrupulously avoids mention of his own part in events: even in the pages of the *Journal*, he is careful to omit undue reference to his own activities.

Kuala Lumpur,
Selangor

June, 13, 1894.

My Dear Archie,

What a good boy you are & your brothers, too, to send me such nice letters. I am very sorry indeed to hear about the mumps and the measles, and also how you suffer from colds. And now I hear that poor Uncle George has been very ill: poor Auntie Nell must indeed have her hands full: and cousin Kate, too, quite enough to do.

I was very pleased with the account you gave me of your visit to Malden, & should dearly liked to have been with you when you were paying your visits in the village; and looking at our old cottage, and sitting out in Aunt Sarah's garden. I suppose you saw Archie Rough & Mrs. Archie Rough?

I expect Mr Sanderson will call on you soon, you remember him. He is only going to stay in London a short time. Mr Paxon has come back from Hong Kong: he was sitting on the verandah when your letter came, and although I did not run out and fall upon his neck (there happened to be a visitor there) yet I gave him your letter to read. He was very much amused, and laughed a great deal. Mr Dalglish, who is in Kuala Lumpur, often asks after you. Mr Hone was staying here for a few days last week.

George is all right again, and I expect him here at the end of this month. It is just a year since I saw him.

Give my love to my dear little Bob & Don, and tell old Phillibubs, how much I want to see him, in fact to see you all, & that they are all to be good boys and wait patiently until Father comes home. Give my love to Uncles and Aunts & cousins, & believe me your loving.

Father.

Mr Sanderson was a Director of Messrs. Riley, Hargreaves, & Co., one of the leading engineering companies in Selangor. In April 1894, he had given an exhibition of electric light in his house in Kuala Lumpur. Mr Paxon had left for Hong Kong at the beginning of May 1894, to recuperate from a 'nasty touch' of fever.

Mr Hone was this year described as a member of the Malay States Tin Mining Company. Later, he also became a member of the Selangor Planters Association.

Kuala Lumpur

10th. August, 1894.

Mr Dear Archie,

You will begin to think that you are not any more to have a letter from me: but I must tell you that, of late, I have been very busy in my office as well as out of it, and have had little or no time to spare — a poor excuse, but it must answer.

*You ask me if I am well — I am glad to say I am fairly "so so". You also enquire after George, Mr Paxon, Ah Chow, "Dolly" and the new monkey. You will have heard that George is now living with Mr Paxon and I in Kuala Lumpur and is attending the Victoria Institution, of which you will have read in the "*Selangor Journal*". (I hope, although you never mention it, that you always do read the "*Selangor Journal*", as well as look through the "*Gazettes*", I always send them.)*

Georgie is very well, altho' he does not look very strong, and much prefers living here to living in Singapore. He tells me he wrote to you last week and sent some rare stamps. (I am sending some in this letter.) He is getting on well at school: does Euclid, Algebra, Latin, & goodness only knows what: I hope you are trying all you know to catch up to him. He was doing a map of South America the other evening, and it made me think of you, because you used to be so fond of geography. He has also been doing some pictures, I enclose one or two.

Mr Paxon is very well, except that he has been hit on his big toe with a cricket ball: it is very painful, I am sure, but we make fun of it, so in your next letter you must express a hope that Mr Paxon's toe is nearly well.

Ah Chow has, I am glad to say been back from China for some time, & is now looking after, not only me, but Georgie. He was not at all well when he returned, but is all right now, and is as good as ever he was. He was very much

interested in the portraits of your class and Phil's class, & it was very kind of you to send them.

Dolly, who is lying down beside me now, is getting very fat, and, I am afraid, a little snappish in her old age (5 years); she objects sometimes to strangers patting her, and emits a low growl if they take the liberty of touching her. She, however, takes the same keen interest in printing as she used to do, and is never so happy as when she is coming to office with me; a little drawback to this is that she sometimes take an insane objection to some person or other who comes to see me or visits the office, on business.

At night time she sleeps in my bedroom, & often makes the mosquito curtain very dirty — by lying on it: she also dreams that burglars have broken into the house occasionally, and not only makes a dreadful din & nearly bursts herself in barking, but also makes me nearly burst with rage at being woken up. She is possessed with the idiotic idea that every sound she hears is made by someone who is attempting to thieve; and, even in the day time, regards everyone who approaches the house as a robber. Still, with all these faults, or rather excess of zeal, she is a very nice little doggie, & I am very fond of her.

As for the monkey, the last on your list of enquiries, she is now looked after by Georgie, who makes her "tabek" (put her hand to her head, you remember: "Tabek, Tuan!") and turn head over heels before she gets her "pisang" (banana). Do you recollect how our old monkey sat in the butter, once?

Do you remember tasting durians out here? We have had a good season for durians, & have had plenty up here: Georgie does not like them !!! It is true that they smell like very bad drains (worse, in fact), but one gets used to that, & enjoys eating them. They have been very cheap, ten or twelve cents each in Kuala Lumpur, and less than that in the country districts; before now I've only been able to get three for a dollar, but that is usually at the beginning of the season. I don't think they can be sent home, they would go bad: I expect people would think they were bad to start with.

You must tell Phil that I am very glad to get his letters, and when he gets a new overcoat to take great care of it. Poor old Don & Bob have had measles: but are now, I hope, all right again. What a time poor Auntie must have had, and Kate, too. Don and Bob are getting on well at school, I see, and will soon be able to send nice long letters: still I am very glad to get even short letters from my dear little boys — I expect that by the time I see them they will be my dear big boys. Mind you read this letter to your three brothers, all together.

I have not heard for some time from Uncle Arthur; just you tell him so. I am also anxious to know how Uncle George is: he had a very bad turn: that accounts for me not hearing from him. I don't know what I should hear if it were not for Auntie Nell. I expect you have seen Mr Sanderson before this, and very likely Auntie Cluffe from America, and Auntie Fox. But there, I must stop, George wants his dinner, & I have to get up very early to-morrow, and won't feel much like writing after "makan"; so I must close with love to my dear boys, to Katie & Ernest, and Aunt and Uncle. Your loving and affectionate Father,

J.R.

George had arrived on board the *Sappho* on 30th June, at the beginning of his school's summer holidays. In the event, he never returned to school in Singapore, but finished his education in the recently established Victoria Institution in Kuala Lumpur.

On 6th October 1894, Sir Charles Mitchell, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, opened a new railway extension northward to Kuala Kubu, which John Russell had visited in March.

Later on the same day, Sir Charles laid the foundation stone of the large Government building to be erected opposite the Selangor Club at a cost of $152,000 — a vast sum at that time. The plans were displayed to the assembled company, and Sir Charles obviously had his doubts about the wisdom of building such a huge edifice in the midst of this still primitive township. In replying to Mr Treacher's thanks for his presence on that occasion, Sir Charles said *inter alia*:

> *'I am nothing if I am not economical, and I believe that States, like individuals, when they are flourishing most should husband their resources. Your tin won't last for ever — at least, I find my tin won't last — and although I think you are going on the right lines in developing your agricultural resources, you should keep any surplus for spending on cutting roads, opening means of communication and in actual utilitarian works. Not that these offices are not, to a certain extent useful, but I think you might have waited a little while . . .'*

Despite these misgivings, the Governor laid the foundation stone, and received a handsome silver trowel presented by Mr A.C. Norman, the architect who had designed the building. In a cavity below the stone, Sir Charles placed a Japanese yen, some Straits coins, a piece of tin, and a copy of the latest *Journal*. Evidently a Freemason, the Governor then declared the stone "well and truly laid in the name of the Great Architect of the Universe".

Immediately after this ceremony, Sir Charles was driven off to the Victoria Institution, where he was received by the Trustees, and the Headmaster, Mr B.E. Shaw, M.A., who had been specially recruited in England. The Governor was shown over the building with the scholars in attendance. From there, Sir Charles, accompanied by Mr Treacher, went on to the new Masonic Hall, which was almost complete and due to be officially opened in ten days' time.

The Governor left Selangor on the following day, and returned to Singapore. Later that day, Mr and Mrs Treacher sailed for England on home leave. Treacher was relieved by Mr J.P. Rodger, who was brought from Pahang to become the Acting British Resident, Selangor.

The Masonic Hall was opened on 16th October 1894, at a ceremony attended by Mr Rodger and also by Yap Kwan Seng, the Capitan China. At the Masonic Installation Meeting held on 22nd October, John Russell was installed as Master for the ensuing year, taking over from his friend Mr Richardson. In view of the powerful influence of Freemasonry at that time, as

Master of Selangor's only Lodge, John Russell's position in society was greatly enhanced. His responsibilities and obligations were correspondingly increased.

Read Lodge was growing steadily, involving more work for the Master. The Musuem was also expanding, as were the Public Gardens, all creating additional committee meetings. The size of the *Journal* increased as more contributors came forward — resulting in much additional correspondence for the Editor. In November, he was deputed to act as Chairman of the monthly committee meeting of the Selangor Club, a task usually undertaken by either the Resident, or one of his most senior advisers.

John was now approaching his fortieth birthday, and he bore himself with the well-earned confidence of a successful man. Six feet tall and with a stupendous constitution, he was a shining example of robust health. Although he could be described as a meticulous or even fussy man, he was blessed with a well developed sense of humour. He disliked disorder and had always insisted on good behaviour from his children. He also possessed an appreciation of style and dressed well, besides being something of a gourmet.

In common with most male members of the community, John undoubtedly drank a good deal of alcohol, not only to oil the wheels of good fellowship, but also in the widely-held belief that spirits helped to ward off various tropical diseases. Drunkenness, however, was not tolerated.

Sometime between August and mid-November, 1894, John Russell and his son George left Mr Paxon's house, and moved to government quarters previously occupied by Steve Harper. As Harper was a fairly senior police officer, this house was probably within easy reach of police headquarters on Bluff Road, nearer to the Printing Office than Paxon's house.

On 17th November, John wrote a Christmas letter for his children.

My Dear Archie, Phil, Don & Bob.

First of all, let me wish you "A Very Merry Christmas," and then let me tell you how very glad I was to get a letter from each of you. I can see by them that Arch & Phil are progresssing famously, and that Don & Bob are coming along well; Don, I see is quite an artist. Archie hopes that I am quite well and George, and Mr. Paxon and everybody else — Well, thank you, we are all pretty fair and so-so. Mr. Sanderson told me that you had had a visit from his mother and sisters, and I was very glad to hear it.

The disturbances in Pahang which Archie enquires about, are quite a "fresh lot", & have just recently been settled again — for a time.

This was a reference to rebellious gangs in Pahang which had been active in 1893 and 1894. Several lives had been lost in the fighting.

George, at present, is not collecting stamps, I think that numismatology is occupying his attention now — if you know what that is: when in doubt try the dictionary. George is glad you liked the pictures, and begs me to tell you that

when at Raffles he was in the "Special", but now, in Kuala Lumpur, he works with the 7th.

Dear old Philosopher *starts his letter "Dear George" and winds up "loving son", so it is evident that he was in a bit of a fog, but he has got on splendidly, and writes very well, George & I were very sorry to hear of his mishap in the mud, I quite feel for — his clothes ! We also rejoiced to hear that he was doing long division, and have put his picture on the wall.*

As for Donald, his writing is nice and round as he was, or rather as his new hoop is: and as for his subtraction and division sums — why, he is quite an accountant.

Then there is a letter which, I think, must be from my dear little Bob, it has all sorts of funny things on it, and is just as interesting in its way as the others.

I mustn't forget that Auntie puts in a half sheet of paper, and says "Just a few lines to fill up". Just a few lines to fill up, indeed! Why it was just a few lines to make the letter overweight, and I had to give the postman 16 cents. Just think of that. Almost as bad as poor Arthur Stutter having to pay 10d. for a letter from me, once.

Now, I have gone over all the letters you sent, and we'll talk of — what? Well let's talk about my new house & house-hold. Ah Chew is now my cook, &, as I told you, I am living in the house where Mr. Steve Harper used to live. I have got a little China boy, such a smart little fellow, you should see him bustling around, and see him when he waits at table. I have a very high dinner wagon, and I always make a point of asking Billy, — his name is Ah Kong, but I always call him "Billy" — to hand me down something which happens to be on the top shelf, just to see him tiptoe to reach it. Then to see Billy when he is cleaning up the house in the morning: the way in which he dashes the rugs and mats over the verandah railing, sweeps the rooms and goes round dusting, all in the twinkling of an eye, is simply splendid. Then he is very fond of the monkey. He was quite surprised when he found out what an intelligent monkey it was. How it would "Tabek" for anything & turn "Tumbok", that is — head over heels. But in addition to Billy, I have another new member of the household, who is a good deal smaller, a great deal noisier, & just as sharp: that is a fluffy little white dog. Poor Dolly, who is now getting old and staid, is nearly worried out of her life with the little beast. He doesn't mind a bit for her growls, and wouldn't even stop when she took him up and shook him. Occasionally a stray bullock or some cows come into my compound, & then is the time to see the puppy — you would think he was going to eat them. I must admit that he is a fearful nuisance in the way of barking, and I shouldn't be a bit surprised if he, one of these days, were to burst. His proper name is Toby Waggles, but we call him "Chibby-wibby-wibby" for short. Just now while I am writing he is trying to make a supper off one of George's socks; George has gone to bed, and incautiously thrown his socks on the floor, I suppose. At any rate Chibby has brought one out of his bedroom, and there won't be much of it left, unless I stop him.

Another member of the family, and one that Archie would have liked, has now left us, and taken up his permanent abode in the Selangor musuem: and that

was a frog: not one of your ordinary frogs, but a kind of mammoth frog. When he was stretched out he measured 15 inches from his nose to his hind foot, his head was 3 inches across, his body proper was 9 inches long. As for his thighs, well, I was going to say they were as large as yours, but, I won't say that because I hear you have all got very fat since I saw you; but, anyhow, he was a monster — and jump! My, he could jump. Ah Chew found him just near the house. We tied a rope — well, a piece of thick string round his loins, and fastened him to a tree; we gave him a tub to swim in, and tempted him with all kinds of dainties. But he wouldn't make friends; was perverse enough to die. So I packed him off to the musuem, where they have one or two similar specimens, but none of them so big as this one. If ever you come out again you'll see him. It makes me shudder to think how I should have felt had I stepped upon him one night in the dark in the bathroom.

When we lived at Malden, sometimes there would be a lot of little frogs out at night on the path, and I always had a horror of treading upon one — but to tread on one of these gigantic ones with a bare foot; and feel it squirm away — oh loh, oh lor! I am sure I should expire.

There is only one thing, & that occasionally comes into the house, that I have a greater dread of, & that is a bat. Sometimes, at night; when a bat has been circling round my head, I have felt inclined to get under the table. But, there, I could enumerate a whole host of things, flying and creeping, whose room I would rather have than company.

If you were back in Kuala Lumpur now, there are a great many things to see which did not exist when you were here. There is a large new Church near the Club, all brick and tile; then in the Damansara Road — Mrs. Crompton used to call it "Batu Lima Blas" — is a large new building, the Masonic Hall; in High Street, a pile of buildings called the Victoria Institution, that's where George goes to school; down the Brickfields Road is a large State Factory; Mr Prentice's workshop is four times its former size; my office is twice its former size; all those Chinese houses opposite the Club are pulled down and the new Government Offices are being built there; but what is the good of me telling you all this, and you have read all about it in the Journal, eh?

I had better tell you about Mr Paxon. Well, he is in first-rate condition, & going along splendidly with the waterworks. I have not been out to Ampang for a very long time, but I mean to go one of these days to see how Mr P. is getting on there. The Reservoir in Kuala Lumpur, where Arch & Phil with Mr Dalglish and I had a walk one Sunday evening is almost finished, and we shall soon, I hope, be getting water. And what will the Tukang Ayer do then, poor thing?

Mr Hone is frequently in Kuala Lumpur now, and tells me that next February he hopes to go to London: if he does, he is sure to come to see you. Archie's friend, Mr Dalglish is still in Kuala Lumpur, but times have been rather hard with him. He often asks after you all. Dr Travers, I hear has arrived in Singapore, and will be in Kuala Lumpur next Sunday. Let me see, who else? oh, Roderick Pereira is at The Victoria Institution, & Georgie and Jennie Smart are still to be seen near the Club of an evening. Yes, and Pat Birch, with his father and mother and sisters is in England; no, in Scotland;

and so are Mr & Mrs Syers and their two little girls. Any more ? No, can't think of any more at present. Shall go to bed, and finish this to-morrow. Oh, by-the-bye, I have got to be at office to-morrow, Sunday, as I am so very busy. (Part of letter missing).

I'll try to finish this "Christmas letter" later.'

After some alteration, this letter was dated 17th November 1894. It was not, however, finished until 26th November.

'My dear Boys,

Only fancy, been so busy, couldn't write any more. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

Your loving

Father.'

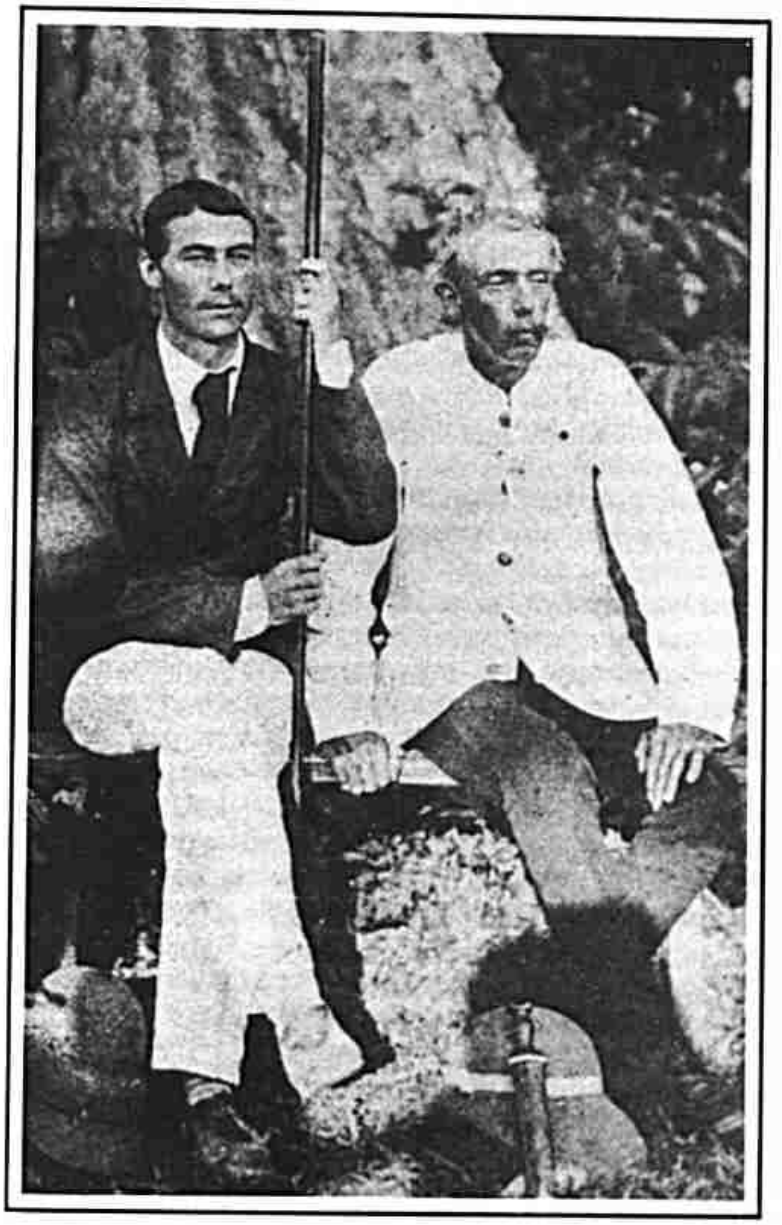
Shortly after the dispatch of this long letter, John Russell's office received some unwelcome visitors. He described the event in the *Journal*:

'Sometime during the night of the 27th, or early morning of the 28th inst. (November, 1894), the Government Printing Office was entered and the safe taken away. The burglars — there must have been more than one — acted with the greatest consideration, and bore their burden right through the office from the front of the building out at the back without knocking over "frames," "cases," or any other of the impediments of a printing office, some of which take so long to build up and are so easily knocked down. "To the time of going to press no clue had been discovered" . . .'

John's report went on to say that it was the funds of the *Journal* which had chiefly suffered, although no large amounts appear to have been involved. Not long afterwards the safe from the Residency Surgeon's office was similarly removed, as was the safe from the Selangor Club. So far as is known, the criminals were never caught.

At Christmas, 1894, Archie also received a letter from George saying that he had now left school, and would be starting work in Mr Sanderson's firm of Riley, Hargreaves & Co. in Singapore. He would be staying at Barganny Lodge, 'Mrs Basagoili's house'.

An early photograph of Frank Swettenham (left) and J.W. Birch taken at Blanja, Perak. (By courtesy of the National Archives of Malaysia).



16 Federation

In January 1895, William Maxwell, Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements, left Singapore on being appointed Governor of the Gold Coast in Africa. This promotion, which involved an almost automatic knighthood, brought to an end the long years of rivalry between Maxwell and Swettenham.

William Maxwell had always considered himself senior to Frank Swettenham, and when the latter had been made Resident of Perak, the premier state, Maxwell had taken it as a slight on his own capabilities. Even in London, the rivalry between these men had been recognized by the Colonial Office. Both were known to be hard-working and efficient; Swettenham possessed the greater degree of charisma while Maxwell was inclined towards formality and all the trappings of office.

There is no doubt that William Maxwell could appear aloof and forbidding to outside observers, but to those with whom he had a closer relationship he gave a different impression. John Russell, who had worked with him almost daily, had formed a high regard for both William Maxwell and his wife.

As part of a leader on the new appointment of Maxwell, the *Singapore Free Press* wrote, *inter alia*:

> '. . . (we take) *the opportunity of saying how general will be the regret to part with Mrs. Maxwell, whose tact, amiable sympathies and pleasant hospitalities were so signal a feature of her husband's tenure of office . . .*'
>
> '. . . *should the course of incidents in the Colonial Service ever bring Mrs. Maxwell back to Singapore, everybody in the Colony will be delighted to see her once more amongst us.*'

On the eve of her departure, Mrs. Maxwell was presented with a diamond bracelet and shamrock pin 'as token of the affectionate regard in which she was held'.

Frank Swettenham's married life had not been so successful. Although for a few years Mrs. Swettenham had fulfilled her role as the wife of the Resident of Perak, illness had apparently intervened and she had returned to England, leaving Swettenham virtually single for most of his remaining colonial service.

Swettenham was some years younger than Maxwell, and even if he had been offered promotion outside Malaya, it is unlikely that he would have accepted it. There had been no diminution in his ambition, however, and he was already planning a satisfactory solution to the problem of his own promotion — within Malaya. For some time previous to 1895, Swettenham had been proposing to his friends in the Colonial Office that the four states of Perak, Selangor, Pahang, and Sungei Ujong should be joined together in a

Federation governed by a Resident General — a new post for which he would be the ideal incumbent.

Yet, apart from Swettenham's personal interest in the creation of this new post, there were some solid grounds for his arguments. It was obviously desirable that the four States should have unified policies on matters of common concern: Land Use, Railways, Roads, Defence, Police, Posts and Telegraphs should have central adminstration. Previously, the Residents had each reported separately to the Colonial Secretary in Singapore, and it might be thought that the Secretary could have introduced common policies by administrative fiat — but, in practice, this had never worked. In Swettenham's view, especially as Maxwell had now gone to Africa, there remained no one — except himself — with sufficient experience of Malaya to effect this unification.

Swettenham's proposals were not universally popular. It was obvious that his proposed Federation, with the creation of a central administrative headquarters, would involve the loss of a degree of independence by each of the states concerned. It meant that the British Residents would be unable to direct their departmental heads. The Sultans, also, were in danger of losing control of their own State Councils, though this control had always been somewhat tenuous. The whole scheme was opposed by Sir Charles Mitchell, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, who resented the inevitable loss of his own direct influence over the independent states in the Peninsula.

In his report for 1894, Mr J.P. Rodger, soon to be confirmed as British Resident, Selangor, expressed his support for some form of federation:

> *'It is much to be regretted that the two important States, with adjoining boundaries, similar conditions, and apparently identical requirements, should have passed legislative measures of so widely different a character, as has been the case in Perak and Selangor. To avoid the possibility of such divergency occurring in the future, and of the Native States drifting further apart, it is to be hoped that some scheme of federation will soon be elaborated, which, whilst preserving the individuality of each State, will connect them all in such a manner as to ensure, not merely departmental efficiency and economy, but also that general continuity of policy and solidarity of interest so essential to their progressive development and permanent success.'*

The prospect of federation concerned every government department, and naturally gave rise to much discussion among officials at all levels. However, apart from reproducing the extract from Mr Rodger's Annual Report, John Russell wisely kept correspondents' opinions on the subject out of the *Journal's* pages. He realized that the question of Federation was a matter of policy, which could be decided only by the Colonial Office in London.

In the meantime, regardless of high-level discussion about the future, everyday life continued much as usual. In 1895, the Chinese New Year was celebrated in the first week of February, and John Russell gave a lively account of the festivities in the *Journal*:

> *Petaling Street . . . presented an appearance that could be surpassed, or even equalled, by few other streets in the East. Lined on each side by stalls;*

crowded in every conceivable nook and crannie with Chinese; two continuous lines of carriages, gharries and 'rikishas — one young Chinese "blood" had a carriage-and-six with outriders — going in either direction; Chinese "bands" playing in the first floor of seemingly every other house; a glaring sun, a blinding dust, and a strong odour of cooking, etc., floating round: no description could convey an idea of it! . . .

Mr J.P. Rodger, the British Resident, attended a New Year performance by a troupe of Japanese acrobats which was specially imported for the occasion.

The new church of St. Mary the Virgin was consecrated by the Bishop of Singapore on 9th February 1895, in the presence of a large congregation. This splendidly designed building was the work of Mr A.C. Norman, the architect who was also responsible for the new Government Offices then under construction.

February also saw the return of Captain Syers, the Superintendent of Police, from long leave in England. He was accompanied by his wife and two daughters. Harry Syers and his family had gone on leave in August 1893, at the same time as Dr Travers, who had returned in November 1894. These two officers were Selangor's most skilful and enthusiastic hunters of wild animals. Both were fearless in pursuit of dangerous prey: elephants, seladang, wild bears and crocodiles. One species, however, frequently eluded them — tigers.

Malayan tigers inhabited primary and secondary jungle, preying on hogs, cattle, buffaloes, other animals and, sometimes, mankind. It was once thought that tigers would attack humans only if the animals were old, disabled, or with cubs, a theory which was disputed on several occasions. Individual tigers could travel far and fast in forbidding terrain which made them difficult to destroy, especially by only part-time hunters.

In the *Journal*, John Russell recorded no less than twelve fatal tiger attacks on humans during the six months between September 1894 and February 1895. Most of these fatalities occurred near Rawang where J.H.M. Robson, a regular *Journal* contributor, was the District Officer. No doubt during the same period there were fatal attacks in other districts, which, although perhaps included in official reports, were not communicated to the Journal. Of the twelve deaths recorded in the *Journal* at this time, seven were Chinese, three Malay, one Javanese and one Bengali.

Five of the recorded attacks took place within a few days in the Rawang area. The following extracts are taken from Robson's account:

Tigers continue to make their presence felt in the district. Since my last (report) *to you, three men have been killed — namely, a Javanese wood-cutter, a Chinaman and a Malay cart-driver, the latter of whom was carried off on Friday night last while driving his bullock-cart up from Batu. Indeed, the man-eaters here are most daring, for the other day one of them was reported to have followed a cart on the public road for about a mile without, however, getting an opportunity to pounce upon the driver, a Kling . . .*

Since writing the above a report has been received that a Bengali and a Malay were carried off yesterday at the 21st mile between Rawang and Serendah.

This must have been a hair-raising experience for the fortunate Kling, or Indian, cart-driver who realized that he was being followed.

The Government offered a reward of $50 for the destruction of each tiger or panther. There were few claimants. Among the rural population there were not many firearms: knives, parangs and swords were inadequate against tigers. Armed with rifles, in jungle or long grass, hunters in single file were still in constant danger of attack by man-eaters. Even in more open country, tigers could attack with amazing speed and cunning.

John Russell remembered that Mr Dishman had assured him that tigers did not roam the streets of Kuala Lumpur, and this was true. In rural Selangor, however, tigers continued to be a fatal menace for many years.

Despite John's ever-increasing burden of work both in the Printing Office and in public life, none of the strains of his duties was ever reflected in his letters to his sons in England, and he always wrote with unselfish detachment and calmness:

Kuala Lumpur

16th. April, '95.

My Dear Archie,

As I have just come across a few more stamps, I thought I would take advantage of it to let you have them and a letter at the same time.

Ever since I heard that your aunt and uncle had been ill with influenza I meant to write to you, because you being the eldest you can do so much to help your aunt, and I am sure, what with feeling ill, and the beastly weather, and a lot of little boys to look after, your aunt must want someone to assist her in keeping things ship-shape.

The very best way to start is by making up your mind, and I am sure Phil will do the same, that so far as you are concerned you will not be the least cause of worry or trouble to your aunt: by doing this, you see, your aunt is at once relieved of the care of two boys, that is you and Phil, and not only that, but if you both help in looking after Don and Bob, and never teasing them or making them cry, and it doesn't take much to make little boys cry, especially if they are not very well or happen to be peevish, you will then be doing just as I would wish. I was thinking the other day that you are now over twelve, in fact twelve and a half when you get this, and that little Bob is not yet six: so that you must always be on the look-out to do what you can do for Bob, and look after him. Besides, what is of equal importance, is the good example you will set them all.

What made me think of this more especially now was that Mrs Crompton and her little boys have come back, and I can hear them ! I thought, good heavens,

what must poor Aunt Nell's feelings be if my boys go on yelling like that; and I can assure you I felt very uncomfortable. I resolved to write you, my dear Archie, and to ask you to do all that you could to prevent your brothers being a nuisance to your aunt. And I am sure you and Phill will do so.

Remember, that it is by taking care that you yourself do not cause any worry that you will be rendering the most assistance.

I am very grieved to say that poor little Dolly is dying: whether it is the result of the bite I wrote about, I cannot say. It seems a kind of lockjaw, and inability to use her tongue and mouth. She has neither eaten nor drunk for some days. Since I wrote the above, Dolly has died, and I have just buried her. Poor Dolly, she was as sensible as a human being. I shall never get another little dog like Dolly.

Love to you all, Yr. affectionate

Father.

The prospect of electricity aroused great enthusiasm among the people of Kuala Lumpur, for whom the hours of darkness meant a tussle with candles, messy oil lamps, blackened glass chimneys and shades. There was therefore much excitement when it was announced that the new railway station on Damansara Road was to be the first public building to be lighted by electricity.

At that time — May 1895 — the station consisted of a portico, offices, and two platforms. Invitation cards, naturally printed by the Government Printing Office, had been given a very wide distribution, and an exceptionally large crowd gathered for the event. Promptly at 9 o'clock, Mr Rodgers arrived at the dimly lit station and switched on the brilliant new lights, with the crowd roaring applause. Refreshments had been provided, and the Police Band could be somewhat distantly heard from their position above the portico.

Perhaps due to the effect of unaccustomed light, or simply from a determination to have fun, the crowd persuaded the band to come down to one of the platforms. An impromptu dance was soon under way. Then, to the accompaniment of waltzes and Lancers, the new lighting was celebrated in true Selangor fashion.

On the 14th June 1895, Sir Charles Mitchell, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, was installed as District Grand Master of the Eastern Archipelago, in Singapore. From retirement in Britain, W.H.M. Read, Patron of the Kuala Lumpur Lodge, presented Sir Charles with the complete regalia of his new office. John Russell, as Master of Read Lodge, no doubt sent congratulations and fraternal greetings.

In the *Selangor Journal* of 26th July 1895, John Russell recalled the days he had spent with his friend Charles Paxon in 'the highest house in Kuala Lumpur'.

This article bears no attribution but is clearly from John's pen:

FROM A VERANDAH IN KUALA LUMPUR.

Is it true that nothing is fully appreciated until it is lost or passed out of one's possession? It may be so. The thought came across me the other day when sitting on a verandah that at one time was part of my home, but was my home no longer; yet I could not reproach myself with being formerly wanting in appreciation of the beauty of the view to be had at all hours from there. But the evening was so lovely, the outlook so calm and beautiful, that it seemed to me, who had been guilty of the very thing, that anyone would be an idiot to willingly desert so fair an abode. From there I have noted the break of day — not frequently, I'll admit — and watched the sun heralding its approach by suffusing the sky with glorious, indescribable colours — colours which, before leaving the dull atmosphere of London, I had imagined to belong but to the chrome-lithographs exhibited in Strand shop-windows — the mountains in the far distance towards Pahang would stand out clear-cut with startling distinctness in the early morning light; the lower lands lighting up as the sun rose above the screening hills; and then, often, vapours and cloudiness. Before the mist came, however, while the air was full of chilly freshness, the effect on one was magical. Yes, there was something wonderfully exhilarating in watching the dawn of a fine, clear, cool morning from this verandah; a kind of being lifted out of oneself. Cares of office work? Bah! However great the stress might be, one could cope with double the amount. Family cares? Fiddle-deedee! One was a man, and one must act a man's part. And yet, with shame I confess it, because it shows what a very earthy nature must be mine and how incapable of rising to great heights, I have quitted the verandah — after marching up and down, clad in singlet and sarong, inwardly declaiming on the beauties of early morn, rosy, healthy morn — to seek the warmth and comfort of bed and blanket: to rise again a little before eight o'clock, alas! in a totally different frame of mind.

Even amid the glare of midday the view from this verandah was a thing of joy and a marvel: one was always detecting something fresh in the aspect. But the hour with which the verandah will always be most closely associated in my mind is tea-time, when the other man and I used to foregather in the north-east corner and, while drinking tea and gazing on the scene stretched out before us, talk of all things imaginable under the sun. Many and many an evening have we sat there, talking not only of home and those who are there, but discussing "affairs of state"; how many times have we proved, conclusively, to ourselves, what was wrong and what was right in the Government of Selangor — in fact, we often went as far as legislating, theoretically, for the Straits Settlements: but always, be it remembered, with an eye and an occasional remark for the panorama before us. Not that the beauties of the west could be enjoyed from this verandah; no, it was essentially one for an eastern view, its splendours were those of the early morn. If you wanted to gaze on the gorgeousness of the setting sun from this high eminence you had to stroll around the house, from which the hill sloped away on every side. But if you were content to take your ease in a long chair, and watch the different shades of light thrown by the setting sun on the eastern mountains, you would have small cause for grumbling. At times they would be bathed in a flood of crimson light, at others in purple, with all the varying intermediate shades, reminding me, to follow my previous simile, of the mountains depicted in a German oleograph. There was just one drawback, especially noticeable perhaps on those

when the colouring had been more than usually vivid — there was no impercetible fading of evening into night; not even the lingering rays that might be seen if you were looking westward: at one moment the mountains were bathed in the richest of colours, the next, from the contrast, they appeared dark, drear, forbidding. This sudden transition had a saddening effect, caused a melancholy musing, until one was roused to action by the pestiferous mosquito. Then was the time to light a fresh pipe, to have a drink, and lean back and ruminate, as the stars came crowding out in their myriads. To think that it was midday at home, and to wonder what the youngsters were doing at that particular moment, to imagine what it would feel like to be back there oneself; and, when that would be. To picture yourself in the "Zoo," with a tail of boys, or at Madame Tussaud's, or a pantomime at Drury Lane, or, best of all, to think of lying on the sands at some English watering place watching the little beggars paddling about. My word! It was marvellous the pictures one could conjure up on that verandah.

Then there was another aspect, the verandah after dinner: sometimes with a full moon flooding the scene, sometimes only stars, and sometimes with an ocean of mist covering the whole valley right away from the bungalow over to Lincoln Estate, when, with the lights twinkling in the distance, it looked like a veritable sea, with vessels riding quietly on its surface . . .

The article ended with the naming of various coffee estates which formed part of the landscape, and also of those buildings in the town which could be seen. John Russell anticipated other visits to this favourite verandah while Charles Paxon still held sway there.

In August 1895, an Agreement for the Confederation of Sungei Ujong, Sri Menanti, Johol, Jelebu, Rembau and Tampin, under the name of Negri Sembilan, was published. When this item appeared in the *Journal*, the following comment was included:

It is a pity that Malacca was not thrown in; under Native States' Administration it might lose its name of "Sleepy Hollow".'

This was a remarkably outspoken gibe at the fact that Malacca was still a part of the Straits Settlements. Henceforth, however, 'Sungei Ujong' became 'Negri Sembilan', retaining its highly efficient British Resident, the Hon. Martin Lister.

The much wider Federation of the four principal states was still under discussion between Singapore and London — and, of course, with Swettenham. Finally, the Colonial Office agreed that the idea could go forward, provided that Swettenham could get the approval of the four State Rulers involved. To a man with Frank Swettenham's powers of persuasion, this presented no difficulty. In the course of a whirlwind tour, he obtained the consent of each of the four Rulers. In September 1895, John Russell published a somewhat cryptic notice of the result in the *Journal*:

The text of the Agreement for the Federation of Perak, Selangor, Pahang and the Negri Sembilan has been published in the Government Gazette. The

Federation is to be known as the "Protected Malay States"; a Resident-General is to be appointed; and, in the event of war between Great Britain and a Foreign Power, the Protected Malay States will furnish a body of Indian troops for service in the Colony.

It was later learned that in order to smooth the ruffled feathers of the Governor, Sir Charles Mitchell, he would be given a new title of 'High Commissioner' for the Malay States.

Swettenham had won the day with flying colours. There was no doubt who the new Resident-General would be, and government officials — amongst others — awaited developments with interest, mingled with a degree of apprehension.

Since 1889, the expansion of the Civil Service had been so rapid, and the number of inter-state postings so numerous, that there were now only a handful of government officers who had been in Selangor when Swettenham was the British Resident. Rodgers and Syers were the most notable survivors of those days. For information about Swettenham's characteristics as a superior officer, newcomers had to rely mostly upon what they heard of his stewardship in Perak.

In the meantime, John Russell had given much thought to Archie's future. In June 1895, he wrote the following short letter to him:

Kuala Lumpur,

8th. June '95.

My Dear Archie,

I am very glad to hear you are getting along at school, nothing could please me better. The more you can do at school the more easy will it be for me to get you employment out here; and the quicker you learn, the sooner will you be able to come out. You must take great care with your spelling, your handwriting will improve as you have more practice, & you must do your best at arithmetic. Also read good books of travel, and others that Uncle George can tell you of.

Do you play cricket ? You ought to do a little for exercise, & to learn the game.

And now good-bye with love from

Your affectionate father, J.R.

This letter leaves no doubt that John intended that Archie should get employment in Malaya. Indeed, it may also have been the wish of Frances that the children should have the chance of life in a new country. At the beginning of September, John Russell wrote again to Archie — again mentioning cricket. At the same time, he seemed anxious to know what standards Archie had reached in various subjects.

Kuala Lumpur,
Selangor.

1st. Sept. 1895.

My Dear Archie,

I was glad to get your letter, and must congratulate you on the improvements in your handwriting and spelling, the latter of course is the more important of the two. Now that you can write so nicely you must get a stock of stationery & write me a letter each week, enclosing any that your brothers may write: address the envelope, and do it all yourself. This will be good practice for you, and get you into the habit of correspondence.

On my part, I will endeavour to send you a letter each week — every Sunday.

The photos came to hand all right - but I can't say that I liked them. Poor Phil looked so very far from jolly, and Don had so altered in the face, that I was lost for a moment.

Your Aunt told me in her letter that you were all going to Southend; and I hope you all had a real good time: and good bright weather.

Do you play cricket or football: I suppose you have a club in connection with the school. Exercise of some sort is very necessary for you. No doubt a lot of your time is taken up with "preparation" for school: which, of course, the higher you get becomes the more difficult.

In your next letter you must let me know the subjects you learn, and how far you have reached in them. Don't forget this.

With love, Your affectionate father

J.R.

In view of Frank Swettenham's impending eminence in Malayan affairs, the first references to cricket in these letters are of interest. It was a widely held belief that unless a man was a good cricketer he could expect no promotion in Perak — as long as Swettenham was the British Resident. Other states had never taken the game quite so seriously.

John Russell knew that competence in cricket was almost a *sine qua non* in recruitment to the Colonial Service or to senior business firms in the East, and that even on less exalted levels it was a useful social attribute. In the new Federation, a deft hand with a bat seemed likely to have a distinct advantage.

Anticipation

17

During September, 1895, it was learned that George Russell, now almost 17, had suffered from a slight illness and had been sent to Australia by Riley, Hargreaves & Co. to recuperate. John Russell had received three letters from George on his travels, and at the end of September he forwarded these letters to Archie in London. Unfortunately, these letters have not survived.

Looking forward to 1896 — when he would have completed six years' service — John Russell was already contemplating his first home leave. In May 1896, his assistant, Brown, would have served for three years and become due for confirmation:

Government Ptg Office,
Kuala Lumpur.

8th. October, 1895.

Subject: Mr. Brown, Assistant Printer: Termination of his Agreement.

Sir,

I have the honour, before the Estimates for 1896 are finally settled, to draw your attention to Mr. Brown's agreement as Assistant Printer, which terminates in May 1896. Under these circumstances I would strongly recommend that Mr. Brown's services be retained, that in May next he be placed on the Fixed Establishment, and at the same time receive an increase to his salary of $25 per month.

2. In this letter I may again point out that in Mr. Brown the Government have a steady, painstaking and industrious servant, capable and qualified for taking charge of the management in the event of the sickness, death, or leave of the Head of the Department; and the interest of the Government will be considered by securing a continuance of his services on the very moderate terms I have proposed.

3. I trust that the Resident will be able to submit this recommendation for H.E. the Governor's most favourable consideration.

I have the honour to be
Sir,
your most obt servt;
John Russell
Govt. Printer.

This was a handsome tribute to the Assistant Printer. It is evident from the consistently high quality of the layout and printing of the Selangor

Government Gazettes and the *Selangor Journal* that John Russell's professional standards were exacting, and these compliments — 'steady, painstaking and industrious' — would not be lightly earned. As a result, J. Brown was placed on the permanent establishment.

On 21st October 1895, Charles Paxon took over from John Russell as Master of Read Lodge, the installation being performed by John's friend Mr Sanderson of Riley, Hargreaves & Co. who had been the Immediate Past Master.

In the same month , Mrs Rodger declared open the new Chinese T'ung Shin Hospital in Pudu Road. This hospital had been founded largely by the Capitan China, Yap Kwan Seng, and Loke Yew, although many other Chinese businessmen also contributed.

John Russell had never forgotten the Guy Fawkes night of 1889, when he was considering Mr Dishman's offer of employment in Malaya:

Government Printing Office,
Kuala Lumpur, 5th. Novr. 1895.

My Dear Archie,

Guy Fawkes Day, out here, as you know, is never thought of, unless it is to contrast it with the day at home from a weather point of view. I suppose you hardly remember Mr. McCullock's fireworks at New Malden on Guy Fawke's Night; I was walking round the Lake Club grounds this evening and thinking of it all: and it seemed such a long, long time ago since we were all living there; yet this day, six years ago, I had no idea of coming out here to the East, although Mr. Dishman had previously written to me about it. However, time flies; and the six years which at first seemed so far off have almost ended.

I have been very glad to get such nice long letters from you. George, by now, should be on his way back from Australia, much improved in health I hope. I shall send him your letters and ask him to write to you about his trip.

Mr. Paxon has managed to let us have some water in Kuala Lumpur, although the supply is not yet regularly installed. It will be in working order by the end of the year. You ask if Mr. Paxon will be coming home when the waterworks are finished. That I cannot tell you. His engagement as regards the waterworks will be ended, but he may stay on with some other department. About this I shall be able to let you know later on.

You did not know Mr. Hanrott, who has been engaged with Mr. Paxon for some time past. George knows him very well; and I shall be very glad for you to know him. He is an exceedingly nice gentleman, and as he has promised to call to see you, I hope you will make friends with him.

Mr. W.H. Treacher, the British Resident, who is in England just now, has written to me to say that if I will send your address he will call and see you all. Tell Auntie I have not written to him, but if I do, I will write and let her know. Mr. Huttenbach had returned to Kuala Lumpur, you remember him.

Mr. Paxon's Mother died a short time back; perhaps Aunt Sarah wrote to tell you. Now I must close.

With love from your affectionate father

J.R.

Mr Hanrott, whom John mentions, had been engaged for the past two years in helping Paxon with the waterworks. His contract was now ending, and he was returning to England. Mr Huttenbach was a well-known coffee planter, who had also done excellent voluntary work in the Selangor Club and other organizations.

Later in November, John Russell wrote again to Archie:

Kuala Lumpur,
Novr. 12 / 95.

My Dear Archie,

Your letter of the 17th. Oct. reached me on Saturday, the 9th. inst., the Prince of Wales's Birthday and Lord Mayor's Show Day: however, we haven't a Lord Mayor out here (the nearest approach is Mr. Venning, Chairman of the Sanitary Board) & the P. of W. Birthday was observed on the Monday. There was nothing on in K. Lumpur, & it was a wet day throughout. There was a fancy dress dance at the Selangor Club on Friday night, which was very successful. I did not go myself, as lately I have not been up to the mark. On Sunday morning I went out to Hawthornden Estate, on the Pahang Road, to luncheon. Dr. Travers and Captain Syers went out early in the morning to shoot, and bagged a fine deer; but I went out later in a 'rikisha. We spent a very pleasant day, but during the whole of the return journey the rain came down in torrents; as we were homeward bound this did not matter much. In the evening Mr. Paxon came to dinner with me and we had some of the venison killed in the morning, and it was delicious & tender. Mr. Paxon is now living out at the Ampang Reservoir again, there is so much to be done out there.

The Survey Dept. are engaged on a new map of the State, and it will be ready in a few months. I will then buy a copy of it and send you; the present map of Selangor is not, I am told, altogether reliable.

Give my love to Phil , whose letter I received, and to Don and Bob, & I hope the cold weather will not be too much for you all.

Give my love to Aunt & Uncle and your cousins, and I hope that you will all have a pleasant Christmas - and a happy new year.

With love, your
affectionate father
J.R.

On 7th February 1896, a telegram was received in Kuala Lumpur with extracts from the latest *London Gazette*. These showed that Mr. J.P. Rodger

was confirmed as British Resident, Selangor, while Mr W.H. Treacher, C.M.G., was promoted to the Residentship of Perak, vacant through the appointment of Mr Frank Athelstane Swettenham, C.M.G., to the post of Resident-General for the Protected Malay States.

In March 1896, it was announced that Mr Paxon had been engaged on a new contract with the Selangor State Railway, and would begin his new duties as soon as the waterworks were handed over to the Kuala Lumpur Sanitary Board, which would be responsible for their future maintenance.

Although the new Impounding Reservoir was not due to be officially opened until the following month, Mr Paxon decided to invite a group of his friends to visit Ampang for a preview of the works. John Russell was one of the guests, and he wrote a suitable 'News' item for the *Journal*:

> *Mr. H.C. Paxon entertained a party of ladies and gentlemen at his bungalow at Ampang last Monday night. After dinner, advantage was taken of the glorious moonlight to visit the Impounding Reservoir. There is a boat on the lake ! and the sound of voices singing on the water has a charm that is all its own; and rowing, singing and walking through moonlit jungle paths must be appetising, for on returning to the bungalow no one seemed at all dismayed to find the tables again spread with good things. Of course, the health of the host was drunk, who, also of course, made a speech: a speech quite worth preserving, but of which we only place on record, by request, and without its context, one gem: "The star of good fortune should never fail to shine." A drive in to Kuala Lumpur under a lovely moon was an enjoyable close to an enjoyable night.*

The provision of running water was indeed a cause for celebration. More than almost any other factor, it marked the difference between primitive and civilized living —especially for women. No more garden huts with their embarrassing thunder-boxes; piped water in every bath-room and kitchen; personal cleanliness made easy; clothes and dishes properly washed and rinsed.

On 29th April 1896, John Russell requested permission to visit Singapore on duty:

> *Govt. Printing Office,*
> *Kuala Lumpur,*
>
> *29th. April, 1896.*
>
> *Subject: Permission to proceed to Singapore on duty: asks for.*
>
> *Sir,*
>
> *I have the honour to ask sanction to proceed to Singapore on duty on Tuesday, the 5th. prox., returning on Sunday, the 10th. prox., for the purpose of making arrangements for the purchase of Tamil type at the Koh Yew Hean Press, and*

consulting the Supt. of Govt. Ptg. S.S., upon matters of which I have spoken to you about. I also wish to visit the American Mission Press, for the purpose of arranging for the supply of stereotyped lines for S.G.R. passenger tickets.

2. Mr. Brown, Asst. Printer, would be in charge during my absence.

I have the honour to be
Sir,
Your Obedient Servt.
J. Russell
Govt. Printer.

Shortly after his return from Singapore, John wrote to his sons in England. They had recently been photographed in fancy dress.

Kuala Lumpur,
14th. May, 1896.

My Dear Boys,

I am very glad to say that your photos reached me by the last mail, and I felt quite proud of my sons. Arch as an ancient "Brit" looks first class, and Don, with his rather vacant look and half-open mouth, is quite a realistic yokel. I thought how kind auntie must have been to make your costumes: just as if she had not enough to do without that! Phil and Bob, too, are looking well, and have grown fine. Phil puts me in mind of his mother and of George — although, in Singapore, the people say that George is very like me, yet I always fancy he is far more like his mother — as for Bob, I don't know who he takes after, unless it is his aunt Annie S..... (N.B., I know she won't regard this as flattery!). Anyhow I am very pleased indeed to get the pictures, and as I had just returned from seeing George in Singapore, about which I'll tell you presently, it made me feel as if I were again with my family. I have promised to send the photos over to Mr & Mrs Harper to see, and also to give them your address, so that they can pay you a visit when they arrive in England. I expect that they will leave about the end of the month.

I had a letter from Mr. Treacher in which he wrote that he found it impossible to get up to London to see you; but that he had written to you.

Last Tuesday week, the 5th. of the month, I went to Singapore: I left Klang by the Sappho, and after a very rough night in the Straits of Malacca reached the Settlement on Wednesday afternoon. Mr. Paxon, who had gone the week previous, and George were waiting on the pier to meet me. It was eighteen months since I had seen George, so you may imagine how I was looking forward to it. I found him looking the picture of health. He is still very thin, but tall, and wears glasses; he is, however, full of spirits, and takes the greatest possible interest in his work. He was in the shops for some time, and has done a good bit of work on steam launches, but just now he has gone into the drawing office, where I expect he will stay for a year or more. The principals of his firm speak very highly of him, and I think he will do well. We took a gharry and went round to Mrs. Basagoili, where I intended to stay, with George. I saw some of the models of ships he has been making, & he seems to be very clever. He

is now "building" a ship: quite an undertaking. He still attends a night class for mathematics, and, in fact, seems to have his time fully occupied.

I had a great deal of business to get through while I was in Singapore, so for the Thursday and Friday I did not see much of George. On the Thursday night, however, we went to a fine concert of the Philharmonic Society at the Town Hall, and on the Friday afternoon Mrs. Basagoili drove me out to the Botanical Gardens. On the Saturday, I got George off for the day, and before breakfast we went round to the cemetery, and George, I am glad to say, has taken care that mother's grave has been kept very nicely. I had been round there by myself the previous day, but I wanted to go with George.

After breakfast we went down town, and as I had several places to go to, George passed most of his time in a gharry. We met Mr. Paxon in the morning, and he bought George the latest edition of Reid's "Engineering Handbook" and I bought him another watch — he has been rather unfortunate with his watches up to now. We went home to "tiffin" and, after saying "Goodbye to Mrs. Basagoili, George & I went off to go round Singapore before leaving. A friend of mine had promised to take us off from the pier to the Sappho lying in the roads by his steam launch, so at about 4 o'clock George and I met him, and off we went. Mr. Paxon, Mr. & Mrs. Watkins and a Mr. Fisher, also of the railway, came back by the Sappho, and we all met on board. After a time George went back with my friend Mr. Hall, and we steamed out of the harbour into the Straits. It was a glorious evening, and the coast scenery was lovely, and I having seen George, and also seen that he was getting along well, felt quite inclined to enjoy the beauty of the evening and smoke contentedly. We had a quiet trip back, and on arriving at Kuala Lumpur station found the ever faithful Ah Chow waiting to assist my boy with the luggage, and then rush home to prepare dinner. And this brings me to the end of my paper, so with dearest love to my boys, & to Aunt & Uncle (to whom I am going to write) I am your affectionate Father

J.R.

The Harpers mentioned in connection with the boys' photograph may have been Steve Harper and his wife. Steve had not been in good health for some time, and they expected to be sent on home leave sometime during May. Steve's brother, A.W. Harper, was also seriously ill in England.

Mr W. H. Treacher, the recently appointed British Resident, Perak, was then on leave in England. His predecessor, Frank Swettenham, was also on leave prior to taking up his new post of Resident-General.

A.J.W. Watkins was the State Engineer, Selangor, and in charge of the State Railway. Watkins, Paxon and John Russell, who were among the most senior Freemasons in Selangor, were all close friends.

This is the only known letter to his sons in which John mentions their mother. Previously, he may have been chary of causing distress, especially to the younger boys.

Unfortunately, this is apparently the last of his letters to have survived. Those quoted in this account were carefully preserved by Archie in a leather purse

during his lifetime, and inherited by his wife after his death. Other letters to the boys have evidently perished.

In May 1896, William Maxwell, now Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Gold Coast, received his expected knighthood — an item which was given due prominence in the *Journal*. During the same month, John Russell's Notes and News columns contained a more gloomy piece of news: Steve Harper — the popular police officer and entertainer — was ordered home on health grounds. A large crowd gathered to see him off at the station, and to wish him a speedy return.

Mr L.P. Ebden, who had joined the Selangor service in 1889, left on home leave in June, 1896. The *Journal* commented:

> *There is no doubt that the strains of work as Collector of Land Revenue and Registrar of Titles has been great and continuous during the past five years, and it is not to be wondered at that Mr. Ebden's health broke down some few months ago . . .*

Mr J.H.M. Robson, one of the *Journal's* most conscientious and talented contributors, was deputed to take over these unenviable duties in Ebden's absence.

In July 1896, Captain Syers was promoted to Commissioner of Police, Protected Malay States. This was among the first of the new 'federal' posts, and the appointment was greeted with satisfaction by Harry's many friends. Shortly afterwards, he left to inspect the Perak Police.

At the beginning of September 1896, doubts arose about the wisdom of calling the new amalgamation the 'Protected Malay States'. Protected by whom?; might be asked. British armed forces? This appeared to constitute a major defence commitment which, on reflection, caused some alarm in Whitehall. Would the whole might of the British Empire be cast in the protection of say, Pahang, against a friendly power, say, Siam? Clearly the word 'Protected' was too strong. It was therefore announced that the amalgamation of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang would in future be styled the 'Federated Malay States', with no defence strings attached.

Also in September, the sad news was received that Steve Harper had died in England. The *Journal* of 18th September carried the following item, almost certainly written by John Russell:

> *It was with great regret that the news by telegram of the death of Mr. Steve Harper was received in Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday last. Previous to leaving on long leave in May he had not been well for some time, but his many friends had confidently anticipated that the voyage and holiday at home would restore his health. The deceased officer, a comparatively young man, not much over forty, joined the Government service in 1880; he became a clever and experienced police officer, and for some years past held the post of Senior Inspector. His sterling character and generous nature won him hosts of*

friends, and his quiet humour and willingness at all times to contribute to the amusement of others at concerts, etc., made him a general favourite. He was of wonderful pluck, the type of man from which our British pioneers are drawn, afraid of neither danger nor discomfort, and in the old days he had encountered plenty of both. We feel sure that all who knew him will agree with us in thinking that the loss of men of the stamp of 'Tuan Steeb' demands more than the mere tribute of a passing sigh. Much sympathy is felt for Mrs. Harper and for Mr. A.C. Harper, whose brother, Mr. A.W. Harper, is at present so bad that the news of his death may be received at any moment.

Mr A.W. Harper died before the end of the year. Meanwhile, both Mr Treacher and Mr Swettenham had returned to Malaya. A senior government officer issued the following circular:

"The friends of the late Mr. S.E. Harper are invited to meet at the Selangor Club, at 6 p.m. on Saturday, the 10th. inst., to consider the advisability of taking steps to perpetuate his memory in Kuala Lumpur. I am permitted to use the names of the following gentlemen in calling the meeting: F.A. Swettenham, Esq., C.M.G., Resident-General, F.M.S.; J.P. Rodger, Esq., British Resident, Selangor; E.W. Birch, Esq., Secretary to Government, Perak; Captain H.C. Syers, Commissioner of Police, F.M.S.; E.M. Alexander, Esq.; C.E.F. Sanderson, Esq."

Another tragic event occurred at the end of September 1896. This was the death of Mrs Hurth, who had provided the Russell boys with their first school in Malaya. Mrs Hurth had lost a child earlier in the year, but had now died shortly after giving birth to another infant. In the pages of the *Journal*, John Russell expressed sincere sympathy for Mr Hurth, who was now left with an infant only a few days old.

The first meeting of the Steve Harper Memorial Committee was attended by a number of community leaders including Loke Yew, Yap Kwan Seng (Capitan China), Tambusamy Pillai and others, besides a number of senior Government officers. At a further meeting, held on 17th October 1896, at which John Russell acted as secretary, it was suggested that the memorial should take the form of a drinking fountain, to be erected in Old Market Square. This was confirmed at another meeting held at the end of October.

In November 1896, Mr J.H.M. Robson, who had recently taken over the post of Collector of Land Revenues, confided in John Russell that he intended to resign from Government service to establish a daily newspaper in Kuala Lumpur. This was indeed momentous news for the Editor of the *Journal*, and John Russell no doubt promised to assist Robson in every possible way.

Fountain built in memory of Steve Harper, a Russell family friend. Admirably restored by the Malaysian Government, it stands in Merdeka (Independence) Square.

On 13th of November 1896, the *Journal* carried the following inspired announcement:

A daily paper will shortly be published in Kuala Lumpur, and in our next issue we hope to be able to give some details of the new venture. In the meantime, we will wish it, when once started, every possible success.

18 The Malay Mail

It was hardly surprising that Robson should have confided in John Russell, who was indeed the only man in Selangor who had experience of both printing and publishing. Furthermore, the Editor of the *Journal* had been Robson's only guide to writing for publication, and, during the past few years the good advice which he had received from John had enabled him to have several articles published in the *Singapore Free Press* and to become a regular contributor to the *Journal*.

However, even the most talented journalist — with the potential to become an editor — was scarcely equipped to set up a newspaper. This required practical skills of a different sort: the choice of printing machinery, selection of type, recruitment of staff, and knowledge of accounts. For a young man without previous experience of newspaper work, it presented a challenging prospect.

In appearance, Robson was a fairly tall man in his late twenties, rather gaunt, with deep-set eyes in a thin intelligent face. Despite his serious mien, Robson wrote with a pleasant lightness of style, while possessing a keen sense of humour.

In the event, it was not until the issue of 11th December 1896, that the *Selangor Journal* carried a more detailed account of the new newspaper. In his regular Notes and News, John Russell wrote:

> *Mr. J.H.M. Robson, who on the departure of Mr. Ebden on long leave was appointed to act as Collector of Land Revenue and Registrar of Titles, has resigned the public service, with the object of editing and managing a daily newspaper in Kuala Lumpur, and has opened an office for that purpose in Market Street. Mr. Robson entered the service at the end of November, 1889, as a clerk and draftsman in the Railway, but by his energy and ability soon worked up to the front rank of (acting) official in the Selangor service, and in September, 1893, was gazetted* ex-officio *a Magistrate of the 1st. Class; as acting District Officer, Klang, in the following April; and in June of the present year his intimate knowledge with the land work of the State at once pointed him out as the most fitting official to carry on the intricate and difficult work of the Land and Registration of Titles Offices during Mr. Ebden's absence on leave, where, during the short time that he was in charge, he did excellent work. In taking to journalism Mr. Robson is following the bent of an inclination of which he has already given some evidence, notably in the series of papers he has at different times written for the* Free Press *and in the many articles he has contributed to the* Selangor Journal. *To make his debut as the Editor of a daily is only another instance of the many he has given of his pluck and go-ahead style; but, with all the pluck in the world, to make the venture a success it is necessary that he should receive that wide and generous support which we sincerely trust will be accorded him, not only by those in Selangor who are personally acquainted with him, but by all in the other States and in the Colony who like to encourage every sign of improvement and advancement. The following is the text of a circular issued by Mr. Robson:-*

"The Malay Mail, *a morning newspaper, is to be published daily in Kuala Lumpur, commencing from 14th December, 1896. For some time past the continually increasing size of the English-speaking community in the Federated Malay States, and the more important degree of relationship that these States now bear to each other and to the Colony, have appeared to many to warrant the publication of a newspaper in the most central town of the Confederation. The daily papers of the Colony have devoted considerable space in the past to the discussion of Native States affairs, but more often from a Colonial than from a local standpoint. The internal affairs of the Federated Malay States have now become of sufficient importance and interest to justify a more adequate representation of their particular interests. There were, however, practical difficulties in the way of carrying out such an undertaking; but these difficulties have at length been surmounted, and the* Malay Mail *is being started. The chief features of the* Malay Mail *will be:- telegrams; leaders on current local topics; local news from the Malay States and neighbouring countries; and interesting reading matter. The policy of the* Malay Mail *will be to interest its readers, whilst the planting, mining, and more important commercial undertakings of the community and the welfare of the natives of the country will always receive such advocacy as they may need in its columns. In making this announcement, I beg to ask for your goodwill and support, both in the shape of literary contributions and general information as to passing events. Many incidents happen in the remoter parts of the Federated States, incidents in themselves worth recording, but of which, for lack of a chronicler, nothing is ever heard. I trust that, with the help of friendly subscribers and special correspondents, the* Malay Mail *may be the means of diffusing a wider knowledge of what is happening throughout the length and breadth of Federated Malaya."*

John Russell concludes this comprehensive support for Robson's venture by giving the subscription required for the newspaper:

The subscription payable in advance, will be — one year, $27; four months, $9; one month, $2.25; single copy, 15 cents. At these prices, the daily issue will be delivered, post free, anywhere in the Postal Union. Within a one-mile radius of the Kuala Lumpur Post Office, the daily issue will be delivered, free, on payment of a monthly subscription of $2 only.

Neither the *Journal's* report, nor Robson's circular, mentioned the most vital factor for the success of the newspaper — advertising. Without advertising, or a very high subscription rate, no publication could expect to succeed. The *Selangor Journal* itself could scarcely have survived, despite subscriptions, had it not been for John Russell's relentless pursuit of advertisers. Now, in 1896, the *Journal* was well supported by major local companies, and Robson would also need their support if his own venture was to flourish.

Robson obtained valuable help from the Singapore editors of English newspapers: the *Singapore Free Press* and the *Straits Times*. They recommended suitable staff and advised on type faces and layouts. Unlike John Russell, Robson had no prior knowledge of printing, and was dependent on compositors recruited from Singapore. The hand press for the *Malay Mail* was also imported.

The first issue of the new paper was published on 14th December 1896. This consisted of 200 copies of four pages each. Being entirely in English, the

Malay Mail was directed primarily towards Europeans. Loke Yew was the first local community leader to recognize the value of a responsible Malayan newspaper, and, after the *Malay Mail* had survived its first few weeks, he offered to lend substantial financial support to Robson, whom he knew and respected. This was a magnanimous offer, but Robson, being scrupulous in money matters, decided to accept only $600 from Loke Yew. This was repaid as the newspaper prospered.

Apart from Robson himself, only one other English backer of the *Malay Mail* is known: this was Mr W.W. Skeat, one of the *Journal's* three committee members. However, neither Skeat nor Loke Yew ever attempted to influence Robson, or his newspaper, in any way.

The first issue of the fifth volume of the *Selangor Journal* had been published on 18th September 1896, before plans for the *Malay Mail* were known. Now, in December, with the newspaper already in existence, John Russell's committee met to decide the future of the *Journal*.

During the past four years, the *Selangor Journal* had grown steadily in stature, and was now recognized as a most worthy publication. Under John Russell's guidance, the volumes, one for each year, had maintained a high standard of professionalism. Careful numbering and detailed indices simplified reference to the articles, and well-bound volumes were available.

Dr Travers, W.W. Skeat and the Editor may be imagined meeting in some quiet room after office hours, Skeat having travelled from his remote District Officer's post to be present. There would have been no time wasted on preliminaries. Sometime prior to this meeting, Skeat had told his two colleagues about his financial help to Robson, and he now assured them that this would not prejudice his judgement concerning the future of the *Journal*.

They agreed that it was too early to say whether the *Malay Mail* would prove to be a suitable substitute for the *Journal's* subscribers. It was decided to continue publication for the time being, until the outlook became clearer. In short, if the *Malay Mail* prospered, the *Journal* should cease publication in September 1897, at the end of the present volume. If the *Malay Mail* failed, the *Journal* would continue until replaced by a suitable newspaper.

As a result of this meeting, in the issue of 23rd December 1896, John Russell introduced his usual Christmas message with these words:

> *Again we have the opportunity, possibly for the last time, of wishing all our readers "A Merry Christmas" . . .*

In addition to this 'possibly for the last time' comment, in his Notes and News, he included another item directly referring to the new paper:

> *The first number of the* Malay Mail *was duly published on the 14th inst., and has appeared regularly each day since then. Mr. Robson, who has at present to contend with many difficulties connected with staff, plant, etc., all of which will be overcome later on, has made an excellent start, and has already published some interesting articles. We are glad to see that Mr. Robson does*

not share the opinion that writing on coffee is being overdone, for in the fifth issue of his paper he has a capital article on "Coffee Planting," and we hope that he will secure many more contributions from the same pen. Among others the paper has contained leading articles on "Club Friendships," "The Kuala Lumpur Refuse Destructor," "Service Prospects," and "The Clerical Service."

In naming some of the articles which had already appeared in the *Malay Mail*, the *Journal's* Editor was subtly drawing attention to the freedom which the newspaper enjoyed to examine social matters in depth, a freedom denied to a quasi-government publication compiled by government officers.

Although he had resigned from government service, Robson continued to enjoy the friendship of a host of ex-colleagues, and even of senior officers, including the Resident. He was appointed to various government committees, and, in this year of 1897, he was made a 'Visiting Justice', equivalent to a Justice of the Peace, for Selangor.

The year 1897 was also the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, and though Her Majesty would not complete her sixtieth year on the throne until 20th June, the British Resident called the first meeting of the organizing committee in February. This main committee included community leaders, senior officers and civilians. John Russell and his friends, including Robson, were also members. At that time an unusual degree of co-operation developed between the committee members of the Selangor Club and Lake Club, who were largely responsible for organizing events connected with Her Majesty's Jubilee.

As Vice-president of the Selangor Club, John Russell played a prominent part in many of the Jubilee meetings, and a strong bond of mutual respect was established with the Lake Club committee. In the event John was invited to become a member of that Club. Emphasizing John's general acceptance and probity, he was proposed by Mr Alfred Venning who had returned briefly to Selangor as Acting Resident, and seconded by Mr E.V. Carey, a leading planter who gave his name to Carey Island off the west coast. In the ensuing years John's five sons all became members of the Lake Club, and his grandsons Tristan and Michael Russell and great granddaughter Caroline Russell are currently members.

Unconnected with the Jubilee was to be the opening of the new Government Offices in April. For many months, the inhabitants of the town had become accustomed to seeing intense building activity on the road opposite the Selangor Club and the Parade Ground, where a row of decrepit shop-houses had once stood. Towards the end of March 1897, the bamboo scaffolding was finally removed, and people could only marvel at the building which was revealed: a massive brick-built edifice of considerable beauty and originality met their eyes.

The *Journal* of 19th March 1897 contains an article on the building, probably written by John Russell. In some places he uses the editorial 'we'. The following extracts are taken from this article:

The building occupies a ground area of 45,300 square feet and is built in the shape of the letter F. *The front facade, facing the Parade Ground, is 480*

feet in length, the frontage in Clarke Street being 168 feet, and that skirted by Holland Road 136 feet. It is two storied, access to the first floor being gained by no less than seven staircases, both floors being protected all round, with the exception of the Clarke Street end, by a colonnade 10 1/2 feet in width, floored with cement concrete rendered, carried on brick arches supported by steel girders. The porch in the centre of the front facade is 52 1/2 feet long and 22 1/2 feet wide and 18 feet high, is very massive and imposing and consists of a series of Gothic arches, the columns or piers supporting them being nearly 4 feet in thickness. The arches forming the roof are groined, being filled in on top with cement concrete, making a spacious and agreeable promenade on the first floor.

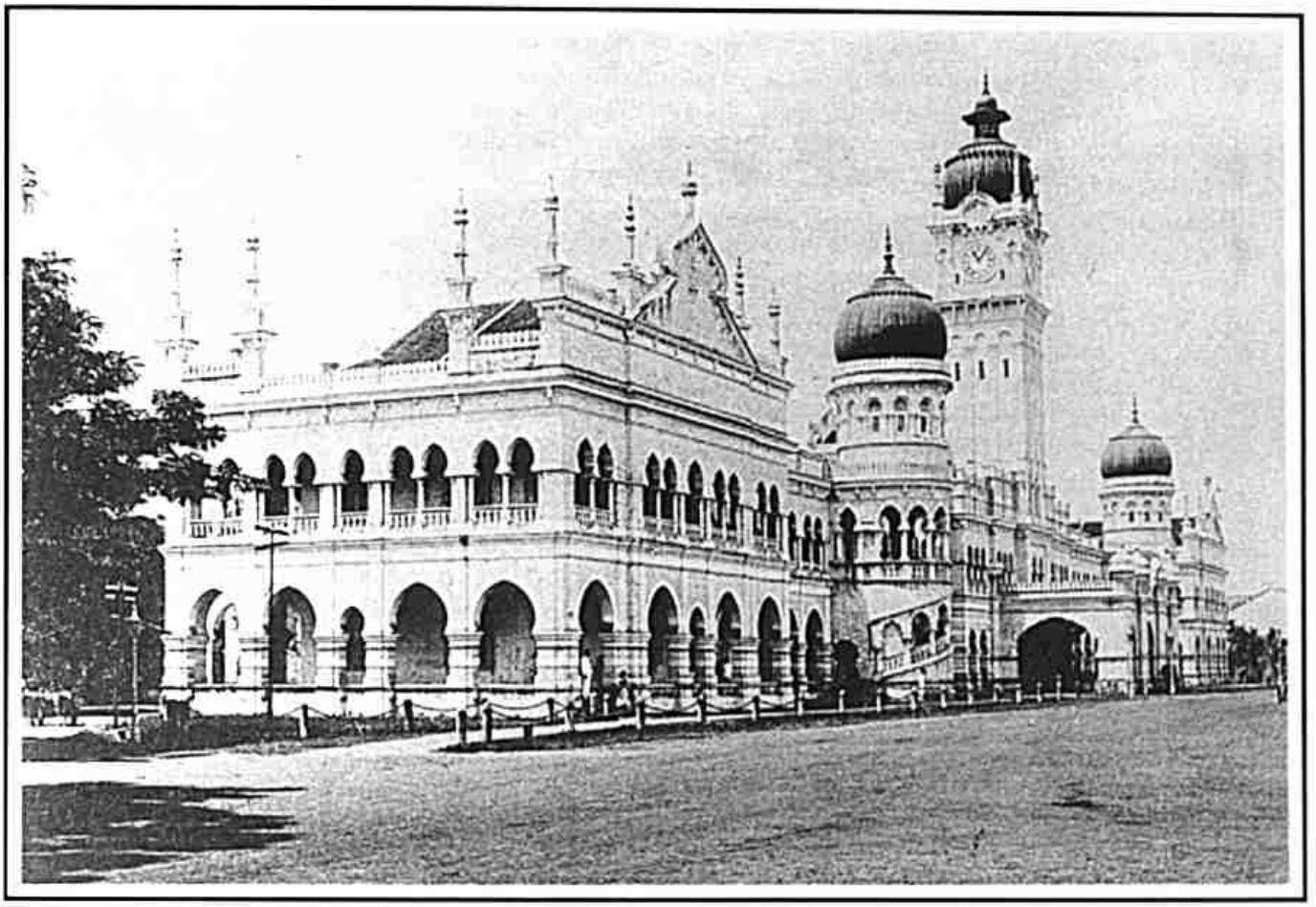
The most imposing feature of the whole building is of course the immense clock tower, rising as it does from the centre of the building to a height of 130 feet above the ground line. We understand that very great care had to be exercised in the building of the foundations owing to the number of disused wells which were encountered during the progress of the work . . . The tower is surmounted by a copper dome 18 feet in height covered with innumerable copper-covered fillets. This dome is again surmounted by a cupola, 10 feet in diameter, covered in copper. The horseshoe gables with their heavy projecting cornices which die into the copper dome and the tall minarets standing at the four corners of the tower give it a distinctly fine finish. Looking at the tower as a whole, we should say that the details appear to have been most carefully worked out, otherwise the beautiful proportions which are evident from every point of view could never have been attained. From the floor of the cupola a fine view of Kuala Lumpur and surroundings is obtained, and as access to this high elevation is possible without any great physical exertion, a visit to the summit is the reverse of disagreeable. At least we found it so.

On each side of the porch, and forming a distinguishing feature of the front facade, are two circular towers, 19 feet in diameter, having stairways leading to the first floor. They are helical in construction and being carried through the walls form a colonnade to the first floor. Above the first floor the towers are carried on columns topped by arches, and above the second series of columns a room is formed surmounted by a copper-covered dome with copper fillets of a similar character to those used on the main tower. The dome is finished with a copper finial of elaborate design 11 1/2 feet in height . . .

The general style of architecture adopted has been Arabesque, judiciously mixed with Indian detail, which has been maintained throughout... It is built in brick, the facades being composed of pressed bricks pointed with grey lime, the effect of which is most pleasing. Plastering has been dispensed with wherever admissible, a departure we hope to see more generally followed in the future ...

The internal colouring throughout, excepting the splayed jambs of the doors and windows which are white, is a pale duck's-egg green. The verandahs are coloured white, while all the external plaster work is coloured a tint which might be described as a biscuit colour. The tints seem very judiciously chosen, especially the external colouring, harmonising as it does so agreeably with the natural colour of the bricks employed in the face work. The building has taken two years and seven months to complete, the cutting for the foundations being undertaken on the 3rd. September, 1894, the first brick being laid seven days later. The cost, exclusive of extras, has been $152,000 . . .

Government Offices, KL



The complete article covered almost six pages of the *Journal* — a greater coverage than could be afforded by the embryo *Malay Mail*. A line drawing of the building by Mr A.B. Hubback, an architect employed in its construction, was included as a supplement to the *Journal* of 2nd April 1897.

The new building, entitled the Sultan Abdul Samad Building, was officially opened by the Resident-General, Frank Swettenham, on 3rd April 1897, in the presence of the Raja Muda and a huge gathering of Selangor citizens. The event took place at night, the building being illuminated by electricity from generators lent by Towkay Loke Yew and Tambusamy Pillai.

In the course of his address, Swettenham said, *inter alia*:

> *'. . . I would go so far as to say that there is no building in any British possession in the East, British India always excepted, so good as this building, taken all in all, inside and out, and what it is intended for. It does infinite credit to everybody who has had anything to do with its building, and they may be proud of it, not only now but for a long time to come . . .'*

The opening festivities included a dance and supper held in the spacious rooms of the new building and the merriment lasted far into the night.

By day, the Abdul Samad Building rose above the town, dwarfing all other man-made constructions. It provided an impressive and dignified headquarters not only for the Government of Selangor but also for the Government of the Federation. It was more imposing than any building in either the Straits Settlements or Hongkong, and visitors were amazed to find such an elegant structure in the heart of rural Malaya.

The new building also had a prominent place in the celebrations for the Diamond Jubilee which were held from 19th to 22nd June 1897. John Russell published an Official Programme, with a portrait of Her Majesty on the front cover together with a facsimile of the Royal Arms. Apart from having general distribution, this Programme was also enclosed as a special supplement to the *Journal* of 25th June 1897.

In the same issue, it was announced that Mr Swettenham had been made a Knight-Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George. Thus, the two rivals, Maxwell and Swettenham, both achieved knighthoods in the same year.

On the night of 21st June, a mammoth Fancy Dress Ball was held in the Abdul Samad Building as part of the Jubilee Celebrations. A hundred and twenty one revellers dressed up for this event, including John Russell and many of his friends. The *Journal* gives a complete list of all their names and costumes, showing that John was dressed as 'A soldier (Bombastes)'.

The *Journal* gives a very full account of this Ball, probably written by the Editor himself. This is the final paragraph:

Print of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee — from The Selangor Journal

> *While the ball was proceeding, the native theatres, Malay, Chinese and Tamil, were in full swing outside, and for a great portion of the evening a party of Singhalese were assisting at a Devil Dance on the path near the main*

CELEBRATION

OF THE

DIAMOND JUBILEE

OF

Her Majesty Queen Victoria

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

KUALA LUMPUR, SELANGOR.

entrance. Each theatre had its own music and the Devillers also, the band was playing in the offices and the bang of rockets and crackers came from the Parade Ground — a more bewildering din it would be impossible to imagine; and every now and then, when the Diamond Jubilee Minstrels gave a performance on the top of the central porch, it was something too awf — well, it simply beggars description: it may have been like the bard of Bayreuth at his wildest moments. We would like to dwell on the humorous incidents occurring at Sam Kee's refreshment bar; on the antics of those who thought it a good opportunity to view the new Government Offices; on the scene in the supper room; on the final march round the building to the strains of the bagpipes, and on the wind-up at the Selangor Club — but the desire must be curbed for time is short. It was a grand night and will never be forgotten !

John had also been on the committee for the Children's Fete, which proved to be a great success.

In bitter contrast to the carefree days of the Jubilee was the tragic news soon after, in July 1897, of the death of Harry Syers, the Commissioner of Police for the Federation. He was fatally gored by a wild seladang while hunting in a remote district of Pahang.

The following *Gazette Extraordinary* was issued by command of the Resident-General:

"The Resident-General has heard, with deep regret that Mr. H.C. Syers, Commissioner of Police, F.M.S., while shooting in Ulu Pahang, was gored by a bison, and died of his wounds before he could reach medical aid. In Mr. Syers the Protected Malay States have lost a courageous, zealous, and greatly valued servant, whose straightforward purpose and tactful consideration for others had secured his influence with all classes of the community."

This was regarded as a somewhat fusty tribute. Syers had been awarded the title of 'Captain' by the Government, and it seemed inappropriate to deprive him of it now. Also, a bison was a European animal; it was thought that the name 'seladang', or 'sladang', would have been more accurate. In addition, it was considered odd that a reference should be made to the 'Protected Malay States' when this term had already been superseded.

The *Selangor Journal* was more forthright:

The position in and knowledge of the State held by Captain Syers was almost unique. Arriving here, close upon a quarter of a century ago, before British protection had been formally extended, what vast changes has he not witnessed and assisted in bringing about. Few officers have had more influence and carried more weight with the chiefs and headmen of all nationalities, few men had a greater knowledge of every corner of the State than he . . .

Extract from The Selangor Journal — *Programme for Jubilee (Bullock Cart Parade).*

The *Journal* reviews the career of Captain Syers, and ends with an admonition to the Government:

It is laid down that when an official dies his pension dies with him, and generally speaking, perhaps, no exception can be taken to this; it is also laid

SATURDAY, 19TH JUNE.

3 P.M. BULLOCK CART PARADE.

The carts will be marshalled at the north end of the Parade Ground between 3.30 and 4.30 p.m., when they will begin to move forward past the Judges, who will be stationed at the Selangor Club. Each cart will bear a number on the near side.

1st Prize	... ...	$15
2nd „	... ...	10
3rd „	... ...	5

Judges { Towkay Lok Yew, M.C.
Mr. H. F. Bellamy
Mr. Tambusamy Pillai
Mr. Tamby Abdullah

5 P.M. CARRIAGE PARADE.

Carriages should arrive at the plain punctually, *not later than* 5 p.m. They will be drawn up according to class, as directed, in a line in front of the Government Offices, and facing towards Gombak Bridge.

Class A.—Pairs and tandems;
„ *B.*—Single four-wheelers;
„ *C.*—Single dogcarts and buggies;
„ *D.*—Sulkies and light American traps;
„ *E.*—Bicycles.

1st Prize ...	Red rosette and whip	} for each class of carriage.
2nd „ ...	White rosette	
3rd „ ...	Blue rosette	
Prize for Bicycle ...	A gold pin.	

*** Special credit will be given for floral or other decoration and for general effect.

down that when an officer dies before he draws pension, no matter how long his service, his widow and children have no claim on Government. Fortunately, our laws and our layings down are not like those of the Medes and Persians; Governments of to-day have bowels and are not dead to all human feelings, at least, we sincerely hope so, and trust that the widow and children of the late Captain Syers will receive from Government substantial recognition of the many years of labour he devoted to the State of Selangor.

In the event, it is believed that some provision was made for Mrs. Syers and her two daughters, who continued to live in Kuala Lumpur. Years later, Robson, of the *Malay Mail*, married Mrs. Syers.

From 14th to 17th July 1897, a Durbar was held in Kuala Kangsar, Perak, when the heads of the four Federated Malay States met in conference for the first time. The much revered Ruler of Selangor, His Highness Sultan Abdul Samad — aged over 90 — attended, as did Sir Charles Mitchell from Singapore. Apart from the meetings of the Council, Swettenham had arranged suitable entertainments: a picnic, said to have involved 60 elephants; a fishing-drive on the Perak River; a sports meet; a fireworks display and elaborate meals.

In August, it was announced that Mr A.R. Venning, the Selangor State Treasurer, was to be promoted to Perak. For the past five years, Venning had combined his financial duties with those of Chairman of the Sanitary Board, the forerunner of the Municipality. He had also been Chairman of the Gardens Committee, on which John Russell also served. By his scrupulous probity and always approachable manner, he had gained the respect and friendship of the leaders of all communities in Selangor.

Another popular promotion was that of Mr E.W. Birch to become the British Resident of Negri Sembilan, a position left vacant by the untimely death in office of the Hon. Martin Lister.

The final issue of the *Selangor Journal* was published on 3rd September 1897, and included 'A Valediction' by John Russell. The following are extracts:

With this number Vol. V. *and the* Selangor Journal *come to an end. The reasons for this, given shortly, are that the* Malay Mail *provides all that is necessary for the purposes of daily news by giving accounts of events of local importance and that the work of editing and conducting the paper are rather too great a tax upon the time of the one responsible for it.*

The Journal *was started to supply a want, to fill a gap: we have now a regular daily press; the want and the gap no longer exist: ergo, the* Journal *may cease.*

The Valediction goes on to thank the members of the *Journal's* committee, and the many other contributors whose interesting articles made the magazine a success. It continues:

Five years, in some ways, is but a very short time; yet in a place like Selangor, at this stage of its history, a lot of events of the first importance can

be crowded into that space, and it has been our good fortune to be able to chronicle many of these . . .

Mention is then made of the Connaught Bridge at Klang; of the new passenger station at Kuala Lumpur; of railway extensions to Kuala Kubu and Kajang; the building of the Victoria Institution, the Masonic Hall, St. Mary's Church, Tung Shin Hospital, and the Sultan Abdul Samad Building. After mentioning various clubs and associations which had been formed during the period, the Valediction states:-

The Journal may, in addition — in a very humble way, of course — claim to have done something to make Selangor known outside the limits of the Straits; to, in fact, advertise the State: because, apart from the many copies that have been regularly sent to Europe direct from the office, many of our local subscribers, we know, have been in the habit of sending their copies to friends at home.

That the items of news we have been enabled to give, the references to passing events and people, will form some sort of record is probable, for as each volume has been completed, so have a number of subscribers had the copies bound . . .

And now we must write "Good-bye!" and it is written with real regret, for, leaving out occasional anxiety, the work of editing has been the very happy task of our spare hours; but there are more reasons than one why the Selangor Journal *should be allowed to cease while it is yet in its full strength and vigour.*

The reference to 'more reasons than one' is perhaps a reflection of the greatly increased amount of work in the Government Printing Office, which now printed *Gazettes* for both Negri Sembilan and Pahang, in addition to Selangor and the Federation. It may also refer to John Russell's impending home leave. While there is some evidence that the staff of the Printing Office received a few extra dollars for work on the *Selangor Journal*, it is unlikely that its Editor ever received any payment for the task, and John may have felt it unfair to leave such a burden to his assistant: even for the duration of his leave.

On 7th September 1897, four days after the last issue of the *Journal*, the British Resident, Mr Rodger, wrote a most appreciative letter of thanks to the Editor. Although this letter is, at present, untraced, John's reply to the State Secretary is on record:

Kuala Lumpur
9th. September,'97.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge your letter No. 4234/97 dated 7th. September 1897, and beg to ask you to express my thanks to the Resident for the very kind manner in which he refers to the work of the Committee entrusted with the conduct of the "Selangor Journal", as well as for the encouraging way in which he promises assistance should a periodical publication of similar character be brought out in the future.

I have forwarded a copy of your letter to Mr W.W. Skeat and to Dr E.A.O. Travers, respectively.

I have the honour to be
Sir,
Your Obedt: Servt:
J. Russell
For Committee Selangor Journal.

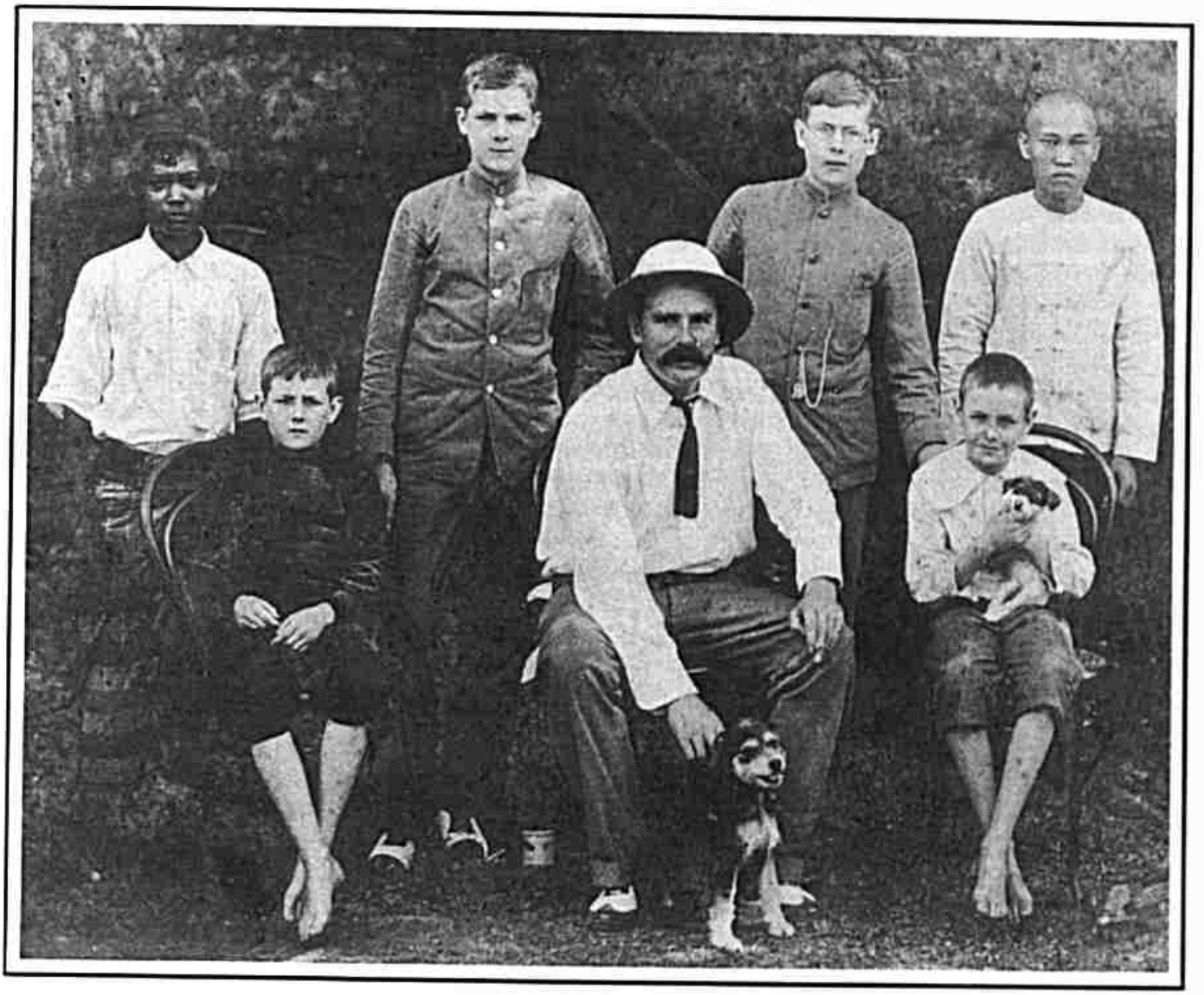
To the Govt. Secretary
Selangor.

No equivalent publication was ever again produced in Malaya.

With the closure of the magazine, a great weight was lifted from John's shoulders: no more fortnightly deadlines; no more time consuming letters to readers and contributors; no more chasing late subscriptions; and, finally, no more worries about the future of the *Journal*.

It was time for the pleasurable contemplation of Home Leave.

The four younger boys taken with John, family servants and dogs, in 1898, probably soon after their return from London. At rear are Philip (left) and Archie, and in front are Donald (left) and Robert. George was probably still in Singapore or at sea on S S Clitus.



19 Passing Years.

British Government officers, on their first contract, could not expect Home Leave until they had served at least six years overseas — or three years after their confirmation in the service. They then became subject to the vagaries of Leave Regulations. They found that Home Leave depended largely upon the 'exigencies of the service'. These could range from the lack of a replacement, to work which rendered an officer almost indispensable.

There were a host of reasons why home leave might be delayed, and officers were not allowed to forget that leave was a 'privilege' to be granted at the government's convenience. They were also expected to use their common sense before applying for leave; if there were grounds for refusal, they were expected to be aware of them.

Knowing that the publication of the *Journal* was likely to end in September 1897, John Russell had not even considered going on leave until after that time. Also, in view of the greatly increased volume of work in the Printing Office, he felt duty-bound to write the Annual Report for 1897. Naturally, this could be done only after the end of the year. Unselfishly, he knew that his four boys in London would be learning more each day, and that a few month's delay of his own leave might even be beneficial to them.

After the Christmas and New Year festivities had ended, John began the *Printing Office's Report* for 1897. Written in his always legible handwriting, the report, dated 28th February 1898, covered six foolscap pages. It began with a comprehensive statement of finances, meticulously detailed under their respective Headings in the Estimates. Expenditure for 1897 had been $25,274.02, with an income of $10,180.69.

The final paragraphs of this report exemplify John's robust style:

> *'The year was an exceedingly busy one, and the amount of work to be done was at times very difficult to cope with. More men and more machinery would have been of the greatest assistance, but there was no space for either. In my reports for 1895 and 1896 I have referred to the need of more room. At the time of writing, an addition has been made in the form of a temporary structure with an atap roof, and it is to be hoped that before this time next year the new Printing Office — for the construction of which provision has been made in the 1898 Estimates — will be occupied.*
>
> *When it is remembered how prolific of Enactments the year was, and that, with the exception of the work for Perak, all the Native States printing, as well as a good proportion of the Federal work, is done in this office, it can be easily understood that this means a very large amount of work to turn out. The staff have worked well and hard throughout the year, and, as in my former reports, I can speak very highly of Mr. Brown's services as Assistant Printer.*

I have the honour to be
Sir,
Your most obedt. Servt.
J. Russell
Govt. Printer
Selangor.'

The British Resident made the following comments on this report:

> *'Mr. Russell and his staff have done a very hard year's work with complete success. Selangor and the other States whose work is done here are indebted to the Printing Office for the punctual execution of a large amount of work turned out with uniform punctuality and accuracy.'*

Two weeks after writing his *Annual Report*, John Russell made his application for Home Leave. At his own request, his leave was to be for one year, made up of three months' 'Vacation Leave' on full pay, and nine months on half pay. Having served continuously for more than eight years, he was entitled to twenty-two month's leave, but he chose to accumulate ten months of half pay leave for the future. His leave was accordingly approved for one year from the end of April, 1898.

The delight of John's four children on the reunion in London may be imagined. His long-awaited presence acted like a guiding hand in the often fog-bound precincts of Peckham. Neither Aunt Nell nor her husband had been able to emulate the close ties which existed between these boys and their father. He gave a fresh impetus to their school-days, and his homely advice was joyfully accepted.

School holidays became times of great excitement, especially in summer, when John was able to take the boys away from the city to the seaside and country-side. Christmas had always been celebrated in their Aunt's house. This year, however, John determined that his boys would savour the full quality of the festival: a decorated tree, presents, holly, turkey, ham, cakes, and carols. A truly Merry Christmas.

The New Year of 1899 brought exciting prospects for the boys. Their father told them that they would all be returning to Kuala Lumpur together, and that their passages had been booked on a ship due to arrive in Malaya at the end of April. Those old enough to remember the congenial climate of Kuala Lumpur were thrilled to be getting away from the biting winds, sleet, and darkness of English winters.

For the first three months of his leave, John Russell had received his full salary of $2,700 per annum, which, with a predetermined value of 4 shillings to the Malayan dollar, gave him about 45 pounds sterling per month. The last nine months on half pay, however, meant a careful watch on expenditure. In accordance with time-honoured colonial tradition, John applied for an advance of £100 to see him through the last weeks of his leave. This loan was approved on 16th March 1899.

At the end of March, in Kuala Lumpur, John Russell's Assistant reminded the Government Secretary of his return:

Govt. Printing Office,
Kuala Lumpur,
28th. March, 1899.

Sir,

I have the honour to remind you that Mr. J. Russell, Government Printer, is returning from leave & is due on the 22nd April. He will require quarters, and as he is bringing out his family of boys married quarters will be needed.

I have the honour to be
Sir,
Your obedt servant,
J. Brown
ag Govt Printer.

The *Selangor Government Gazette* of 5th May 1899, published the following item:

'LEAVE

Mr. John Russell, Government Printer, having returned from leave of absence, resumed duty on 1st. May, 1899.'

John and his four younger sons were accompanied to London docks by relatives and friends and seen off aboard a Japanese ship named the Sanuchi Maru on St Patricks Day, 17th March 1899. It had a Japanese crew and British Officers. Archie kept a diary of the voyage and in the Bay of Bengal he recorded: "we are plagued with cockroaches, they are something awful, they have eaten the remainder of the sweets and father's kid boots and the stench they give to the cabin is fearful". However, on the whole the family appear to have enjoyed the voyage, going ashore in Port Said and Colombo and arriving in Singapore on 20th April.

During John's absence in England, his eldest son, George, had made steady progress with Riley, Hargreaves & Co. in Singapore. In May he joined the *S.S. Clitus* as Fourth Engineer at a salary of £8 a month but apparently did not enjoy life at sea and after working his way back from Calcutta on the *S.S. Darius* joined the Federated Engineering Company. He eventually became Manager of this company.

As an engineer, apart from his early interest in ship-building, George had become intrigued by the latest mechanical wonders: motor cars. Steam cars had been in existence for many years in various forms, but they had never really enjoyed the confidence of the public: they were liable to dangerous explosions, and were troublesome in their need for water. Carl Benz had built a petrol-driven three-wheeler in 1885, which had heralded the development of the modern car. During the next ten years, motor cars had been built in several European countries as well as America, and, towards the end of the century, automobiles began to appear in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. George Russell acquired an enthusiastic knowledge of these vehicles — both steam and petrol.

John Russell now faced the task of finding employment for Archie and Philip. Young Europeans without expensive schooling or family wealth were destined to be put to work at an early age — possibly as apprentices. Before the end of 1899, both Archie and Philip were employed: Archie 16, as a young assistant with the Straits Trading Company at $30 a month.

Since his return to Malaya, Archie had formed a most unusual ambition: he was determined to master the Chinese language — spoken and written. This project occupied every spare moment of his life. Although more than half the population of Selangor was Chinese, including thousands of workers employed in the tin industry, hardly any Europeans had attempted to learn Chinese, which was widely recognized as a difficult language for Europeans to master.

A few British officers from the Straits Settlements had been sent to China specifically to study the language. On their return, after several years of intensive tuition, they became either Secretaries for Chinese Affairs, or Protectors of Chinese. Largely concerned with welfare, these officials were seldom involved in Chinese business.

Until the establishment of the Straits Trading Company in 1887, tin miners had smelted their own tin ore, making primitive ingots of varying quality — a process both time-consuming and wasteful. Straits Trading began the business of buying tin ore from the miners, thereafter producing tin ingots of standard quality for sale on international markets. As a young assistant, Archie Russell was therefore in daily contact with Chinese miners and their helpers. His employers, probably unaware of the night hours which he spent in studying Chinese characters, were impressed by his rapid proficiency in oral Chinese.

Philip, aged 15, was employed at $15 a month by the Selangor Government Railway as an apprenticed engineer. His application was recommended by the Resident Engineer:-

SELANGOR GOVERNMENT RAILWAY

Resident Engineer's Office,
Kuala Lumpur, 7th. November, 1899.

Sir,

I have the honour to recommend that Mr. P. Russell a son of Mr. J. Russell, the Government Printer, be allowed to enter the service of this Department as an apprentice & learn the business of a Civil Engineer under an indenture sanctioned by the Government under paper No. 1838/99 and shall be glad to receive the approval of the Government to my recommendation.

I have the honour to be
Sir,
Your obedient servant,
G.W. Frye
R.E.R.

To The Secretary to Govt.
Selangor.

Philip began his service working on the railway extension to Tanjong Malim and was later transferred to the Seremban end of the new line from Kajang to Seremban where he worked under Mr Paxton. Until the line was built, it was necessary to travel by sea to Port Dickson to get to Seremban. There is an amusing letter on Selangor Government Railway paper from the Resident Engineer to the Secretary to Government, Selangor dated 23rd January 1901, which reads as follows:

> *"I have the honour to state for the information of Government that Mr P. Russell, the son of Mr J. Russell the Government Printer is an indentured apprentice in this Department and is stationed at Seremban. On his transfer from here to Seremban the Sub-divisional Officer in charge there submitted his bill for travelling expenses and his charge of 1st class fare by steamer was disallowed by the State Auditor and deck passage fare substituted.*
>
> *2. I have the honour to request that the Government will be good enough to sanction the payment to him of 1st class fare, as it would be hardly fair to make him travel as a deck passenger."*

Immediately after getting back to Kuala Lumpur, Donald and Bob were put into school at the Victoria Institution, but by 1903 they were back at school in England attending Crediton Grammar School in Devon. Don eventually married Ethel Barton the niece of the school's Headmaster. They had first met in school holidays spent at Crediton. He went on to the School of Mines in Denver, Colorado and qualified as a mining engineer.

Although the Boer War, which began in 1899, scarcely affected the people of Malaya, other developments had important economic effects. In Selangor, despite optimistic forecasts, the coffee crop failed inexorably year after year. Fortunately, due to the prescience of Henry Ridley, curator of the Botanic Gardens in Singapore, a substitute crop of Para rubber, named after a State in northern Brazil, could replace the unprofitable coffee.

The advent of motor vehicles created an ever-increasing demand for rubber, and the Malayan economy went forward steadily. The demand for tin was also sustained. Chinese tin miners showed little initial interest in planting rubber trees, which could not be tapped for about eight years, preferring quicker profits. At first, therefore, the rubber industry was largely in European hands.

The year 1901 brought a change of leadership in Malaya. Sir Frank Swettenham, previously Resident-General, F.M.S., was now appointed Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner for the Malay States.

On 22nd January 1901, the countries of the Empire, mourned the death of Queen Victoria, who died in the sixty-fourth year of her reign, at the age of eighty-two. Her eldest son, Albert Edward, succeeded to the throne as Edward VII. Despite having been something of a rake in his younger years, the new King was immensely popular with his people, and restored to the monarchy much of the life and energy which had been lacking during the later years of the old Queen.

Even in distant Malaya, the death of Victoria and the succession of Edward were regarded as momentous events. The Coronation of the new King was to be held in London in the summer of 1902, and several Malay Sultans made arrangements to be present. However, local royalty apart, a handful of rich merchants and miners also travelled to London to witness the coronation, or at least the festivities. Among these was Loke Yew, who had never been to Europe, although he had a young daughter at school in Scotland. He decided to take his wife and a small party of friends, including Robson, who would act as a guide in the unknown hazards of Britain.

While the stirring events surrounding the Coronation were enlivening the heart of Empire, there was also some vitality in the Russell household: Archie now felt confident enough to request an examination in Chinese. After making some preliminary enquiries, John Russell wrote a letter to Mr Venning, the acting British Resident:

Kuala Lumpur,
Selangor,
17th. July, 1902.

A.R. Venning, Esq.,
actg. British Resident,
Selangor.

Dear Sir,

I shall be very grateful to receive the favour of your permission for a son of mine, John Archibald Russell, to be examined at the 'Chinese Secretariat', Kuala Lumpur, in the Cantonese dialect of the Chinese language, as well as in his knowledge of the Chinese written characters.

The Secretary for Chinese Affairs, F.M.S., very kindly told me that, given your consent, he would arrange for an examination.

Should you be so good as to grant my application, I shall be very happy to defray any expense that may arise in that connection.

I am, dear Sir,
Yours faithfully
John Russell.

This request for an examination in Chinese from an English boy who had never visited China was so remarkable that the wheels of officialdom turned even more slowly than usual. The examination was eventually held in April 1903, with the result being declared in May. The Secretary for Chinese Affairs sent the examiners' report to the Resident's Secretary:

Secretary to Resident.

I & Mr. Pountney have examined Mr. John Archibald Russell & beg to forward our joint report herewith.

2. There can be no question that Mr. Archibald Russell has acquired an excellent practical acquaintance with both the written & spoken language of China & that his services, (whether employed in private or in public business,) will be greatly enhanced in practical value after successfully passing the Examination in question.

Signed G.T. Hare.

Hare was the Secretary for Chinese Affairs, F.M.S., while Pountney was Protector of Chinese, Selangor.

The following extracts from the examiners' report are of interest:

sg/- G.T. Hare.
A.M. Pountney.'

'The Board of Examiners is of opinion that Mr. John Archibald Russell has passed an Examination in Cantonese Colloquial with great credit, and that he has also passed in Documentary Chinese with credit.

'Mr. Russell has been studying Chinese (outside his business hours) for a period of about 2 3/4 years and the examination proves that he must have exercised much self-denial, zeal and perseverance with his studies in order to have acquired such a competent knowledge both of the colloquial and characters in so short a time.

'The Board of Examination is of opinion that Mr. Russell's industry and progress in Chinese reflects great credit upon him and shows how much knowledge may be even accomplished locally by an industrious student without residence in China.

Archie himself, though naturally pleased at having passed 'with credit', accepted his compliments modestly, and although John Russell's pride in his son's achievement was concealed behind his usual quiet manner, he felt bound to express his thanks to the Government:

Kuala Lumpur,
27th. May, 1903.

The Secretary to the Resident
Selangor.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge your letter No. 4047/02, dated 26th. May, 1903, forwarding for retention by my son, J.A. Russell, the report of the Board of Examiners who recently examined him in the Cantonese language.

2. I beg, on behalf of my son and myself, to express our thanks to Government for permitting the Examination; and also that our sense of the deep obligation we are under to the Examiners may be conveyed to those gentlemen.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obdt. servant,
J. Russell.

At this point, the existing records reveal an unexplained mystery in John Russell's life. Even before Archie's examination results had been received, John had applied for 5 months' leave in England. On the face of it, it seems reasonable that having returned in May, 1899, he should have applied for another home leave four years later. Oddly, however, his new application was made on the basis of 'urgent private affairs'.

Probably as a result of a personal interview, the British Resident wrote the following letter to the Resident-General F.M.S.:-

British Residency,
Selangor, 13 May, 1903.

To the Resident-General,
Federated Malay States,
Kuala Lumpur.

Mr. Russell's application for leave.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that Mr. J. Russell, Government Printer, has applied for five months' leave to proceed to England on urgent private affairs, as to the urgency of which I am satisfied, and that I propose granting the leave applied for.

2. It is proposed that Mr. Brown, Assistant Government Printer, should act for Mr. Russell, and that Mr. M.B. Reddy, Foreman, should act for Mr. Brown, these being the arrangements adopted when Mr. Russell last went on leave.

3. The leave for which Mr. Russell is eligible can be granted without inconvenience, and I shall be glad to receive your approval of the arrangements for carrying on Mr. Russell's duties, which are in my opinion satisfactory.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your Obedient Servant,
Sd. H.C.B.
British Resident
Selangor.

Despite the usual bureaucracy, John's leave was speedily approved. He was granted leave on full pay from 4th June to 23rd August and half pay from 24th August to 3rd November 1903.

Apart from the British Resident's letter of 13 May, none of the routine documents connected with this matter give any indication of the true reason

for this rapidly-approved leave. 'Urgent private affairs' would not include anything to do with health — which would have been specifically stated. At present, the questions raised must remain in the realm of conjecture. In any event, he returned to find a steady increase in the work of his Printing Office: more elaborate Gazettes for the States, a plethora of Legal Enactments and a greater amount of printing for the Federal Administration.

In 1904, it was decided to raise the status of the Printing Office by making it a Federal Department. The F.M.S. *Annual Report* for 1904 commented on this development:

PRINTING

During the year 1904 it was determined to undertake all the printing as a Federal matter and to have but one Printing Office at Kuala Lumpur where all the work for the various States could be executed. This was carried through successfully, for which the credit is due mainly to Mr. J. Russell, the Superintendent of the Kuala Lumpur Office. The Printing Office at Taiping was closed, the Superintendent being transferred to the Service of the Colony, and most of the remaining staff to Kuala Lumpur.

A very large amount of work of the usual satisfactory class was turned out by the Kuala Lumpur Office under the able direction of Mr. J. Russell.

Practical recognition of John's work came on 1st July 1904, when he was appointed Federal Superintendent of Printing, F.M.S. — a promotion which brought him an extra allowance of £120 per annum. It had already been agreed that henceforth he would be paid in sterling rather than in Malayan dollars. This change had not been easily accomplished, having involved a somewhat acrimonious correspondence with Sir Frank Swettenham himself.

1904 was also the year in which Swettenham decided to retire, cutting short his normal tour of duty as Governor, and ending his service with the British Government. Swettenham, however, never lost his interest in Malayan affairs. On his return to London, he became a senior Director in a company with extensive plantations in Malaya — a position which he held until his death in 1946, at the age of 96.

It might have been expected that John Russell's final years at the Printing Office would offer some respite from the pressure of the earlier days. On the contrary, with increased responsibility, the problems of his department multiplied rather than diminished. Space remained a major difficulty. Additional temporary buildings did little to help the situation, but merely complicated the task of supervision.

Outside office hours, John's voluntary duties also increased. As a Past Master of the local Lodge, he had progressed further into the upper ranks of the Far Eastern District of Masonry. He had also been elected Vice-President of the Selangor Club. The Museum and Gardens committees continued to call upon his services. Yet, during the six years until his next home leave, John had the satisfaction of seeing his five sons succeeding in their own working lives.

George, his eldest son, was already the General Manager of The Federated Engineering Company Limited, one of Malaya's leading technical firms.

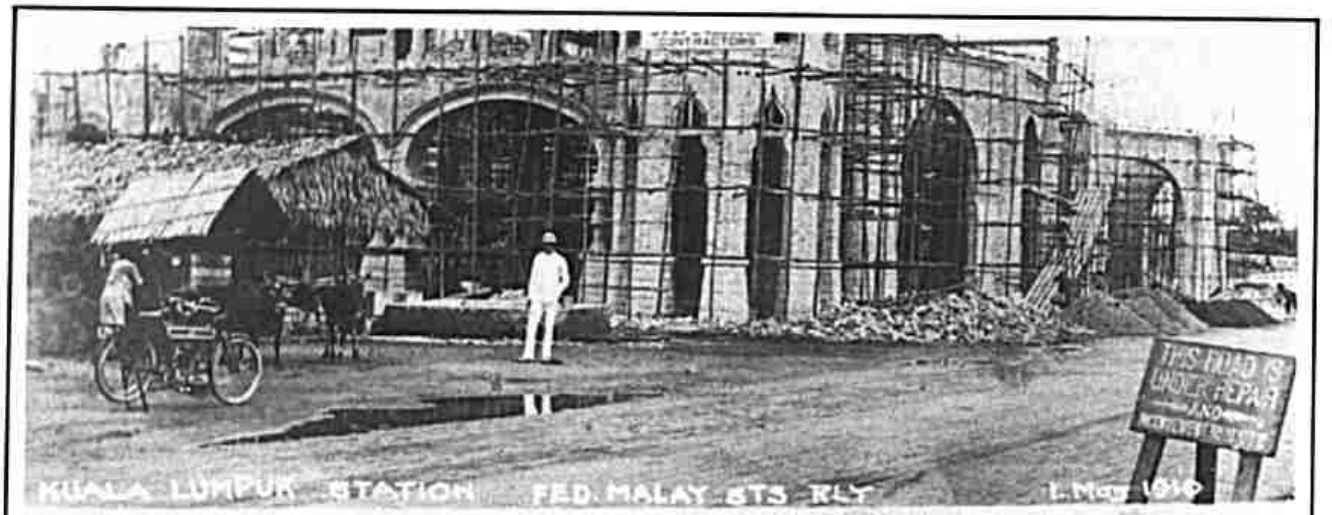
Since passing his Chinese examination, Archie's success had been phenomenal. The existence of a non-government Chinese-speaking European with a knowledge of tin mining had soon become known among the Chinese towkays, who were mostly entirely ignorant of the English language. They came to Archie for advice and help in their dealings with the government.

While still in his twenties, Archie set up his own company, J.A. Russell & Company, dealing in mining leases and property. He achieved a degree of trust amongst the mining community seldom attained by any European in Malaya. He held Powers of Attorney from Chinese miners to manage their affairs, and, in more than one case, he was appointed Executor by wealthy Chinese in their wills. At the same time, Archie also established himself as a tin miner in his own right. Starting with mines in Selangor, he gradually extended his operations into the Kinta Valley of Perak, which was to become the richest tin field in the world. Starting with an almost complete lack of capital, J.A. Russell & Company made remarkable progress in many different business ventures. While elder brother George was invariably busy with his own engineering works, Philip, Donald, and Robert all contributed to the success of J.A. Russell at various points in their lives.

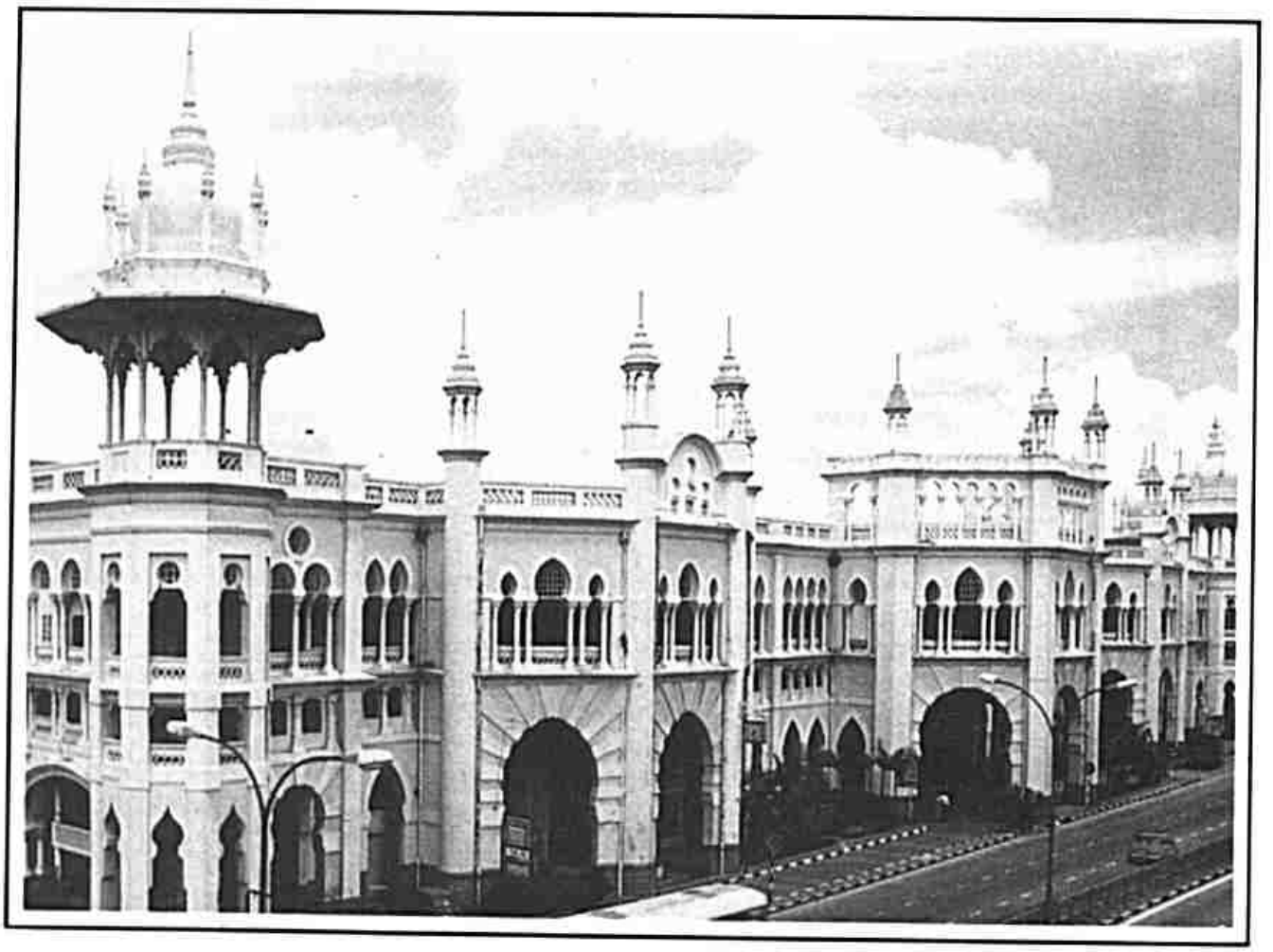
In the early 1900's there were no registered architects in Malaya, and buildings were roughly specified by their owners and built by contractors. Buildings for Malays, Chinese and Europeans were built without the aid of ground analysts, architects, engineers, or quantity surveyors. The majority of the world's most beautiful buildings — including Malaya's — were built before the days of such professionals: Malay buildings, constructed of selected hard woods without the use of nails, and with carvings of unrivalled quality; Chinese houses with traditional privacy, but with practical air vents for the tropics; and European residences with wide verandahs and spacious rooms with high ceilings.

Philip Russell had the ability of a craftsman and the imagination of an artist. His earliest work included buildings for the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, in Malaya and Hongkong. He also designed buildings for Loke Yew, one of Malaya's largest property owners. In 1907, Philip accompanied Loke Yew on a tour of Europe and America. Three years later, he temporarily waived his architectural work to join Archie, who had obtained the contract for building the Station Hotel in Kuala Lumpur — a structure designed by A.B. Hubback, who had helped with the details of the Sultan Abdul Samad Building, and who had drawn the illustration for the *Journal*.

The building of this luxury hotel, with a separate bathroom for each bedroom, was in itself an indication of the progress which had been made in railway communication since the turn of the century. Passengers from Singapore could now travel in comfort from Johor Bahru to Kuala Lumpur, without any sea journey being involved, except for the short ferry trip from the island. The railway line itself ran through mile after mile of well-ordered rubber estates, some now yielding their precious latex, enriching not only their shareholders but also the government.



D.E., Behold me & the contract arch. I have in hand. This only shows the main front.



The Federal Capital of Kuala Lumpur was rapidly developing into a well-planned and prosperous town. New office buildings had largely replaced the crowded areas of the old settlement. Government itself had also rehoused many departments — bringing them closer to the centre of the town. A handsome new Post Office had been built at the entrance to Market Street, and other elegant buildings now stood on the site of the old station and engine sheds. The Government Printing Office, however, remained high above the town on Bluff Road, its disparate group of so-called 'temporary' buildings beginning to show defects beyond economic repair.

At long last, during his final years of service, John Russell had the satisfying task of helping the P.W.D. architects to design an ideal Printing Office for the Federation. The site chosen for the new building was one of the most prestigious in Kuala Lumpur. It was to be situated on the southern edge of the Padang — no longer called the Parade Ground — near to the original Chartered Bank building.

The building was two storeys in height and the ground floor was specially reinforced to take the weight of the latest printing presses. The elegant arched windows at ground level admitted the maximum amount of light for type-setters. Later, the office windows on the top floor were protected from the sun by simple tiled shades with timber supports.

Building began in 1907 and was completed at the beginning of 1909. Although the opening of the new office was the fulfilment of many years of planning — John had never lost his enthusiasm — the move involved a formidable amount of extra work: it was, however, accomplished successfully during the first months of 1909.

Photograph dated 1 May, 1910 showing work in progress on the Station Hotel, Kuala Lumpur. Archie and Philip Russell had secured the contract for this building. A note from Philip to an unknown 'D.E.', is written beneath the picture.

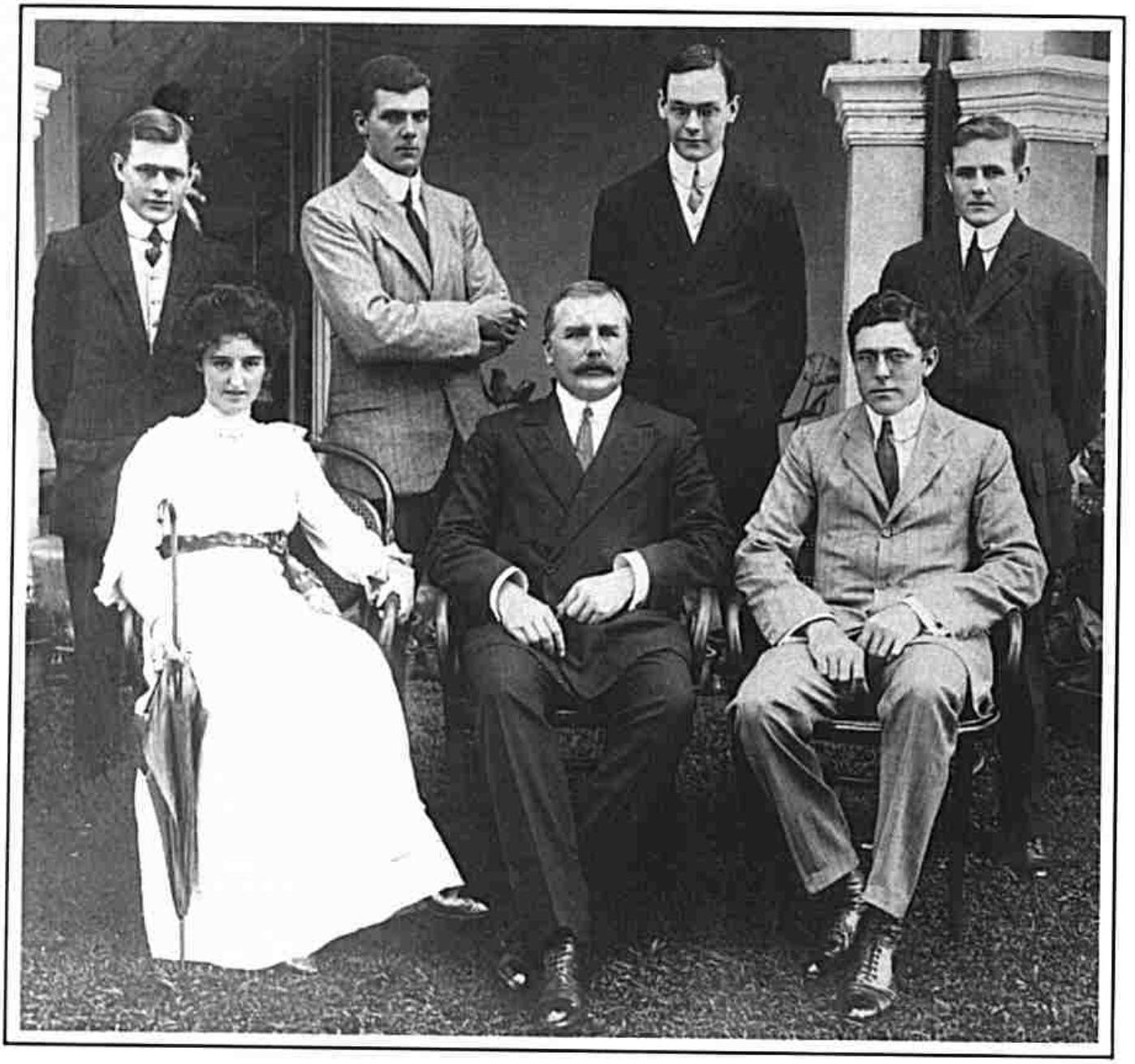
With his foresight justified, and the organization running smoothly in Mr Brown's capable hands, John, after six years, felt that he had deserved a spell of home leave. Sailing soon after the move was over, he returned to duty at the end of October 1909.

From his new office, John had a commanding view of the now dignified centre of the town. His office lay at the edge of the green sward of the Padang. To his left — only a short distance away — was the Selangor Club, for so long a part of his life. At the opposite end of the Padang stood the graceful Church of St. Mary, while on the right rose the imposing Sultan Abdul Samad Building. Having seen the Padang transformed from a rough piece of ground to its present lawn-like cricket pitch, and having seen the expansion of the Club, the building of the Church and the magnificent government offices, he felt almost a part of the history of the capital.

Mr. A.B. Hubback was the architect of the Station Hotel Kuala Lumpur of which Archie and Philip Russell were the contractor. Hubback had been an assistant in the building of the Sultan Abdul Samat Building in 1897.

At this time John and his sons moved into a house with a spacious garden overlooking the race course. It was known as the Shabeen, no doubt due to the liquid hospitality liberally dispersed there and indicates that by this date the family's financial fortunes had improved considerably. A postcard depicting the house dated 16th November 1909 and addressed to Mrs Rough in New Malden was inscribed by John:

"Our bungalow (The Shabeen) view from the garden. Lawn to the left intended for tennis: come join us. Left hand upstairs verandah, early morning



tea; that on the right, afternoon tea. This imposing structure, in addition to hall, verandah, bathrooms, etc. has but five rooms: 3 bedrooms upstairs, one downstairs and a dining room. This place is very prettily situated, and the prospect from the verandah lovely: so much so that the last two Sundays have seen me there all day! Two or three evenings I have not gone into town. We have to keep two gardeners, so much grass and so many flower beds. We are gradually getting things shipshape, and shall be fairly tidy by the time G. & M. pay us their first visit. We expect them early next week. Yrs, Jack."

On 11th September 1909, George Dearie Russell married Madeleine Dearie Masspo in England. Madeleine was a grand-daughter of Richard Dearie and if the supposition that Richard Dearie was John Russell's father is correct, this made George and Madeleine first cousins once removed. Madeleine's sister Hilda later married Philip Russell. George brought Madeleine back to Malaya and there is a fine photograph of her with Jack and George and the other sons taken outside the Shabeen.

In May 1910, King Edward VII died, and the Empire remained more or less in mourning until the Coronation of George V, in June, 1911.

Due to retire at the end of 1910, John Russell spent his last year doing his best to guide his successors, without becoming too involved in day-to-day affairs. He retired at age 55 in the first week of December 1910, having handed over to his Assistant. He had served for almost twenty-one years and his pension was £275 per annum. John was also granted three month's leave on full pay.

At the time of John's retirement, his eldest son, George, was already contemplating setting up his own engineering business in England, while Archie and Philip were still fully engaged in completing the Station Hotel. Donald and Robert were successfully launched on business careers under Archie's guidance.

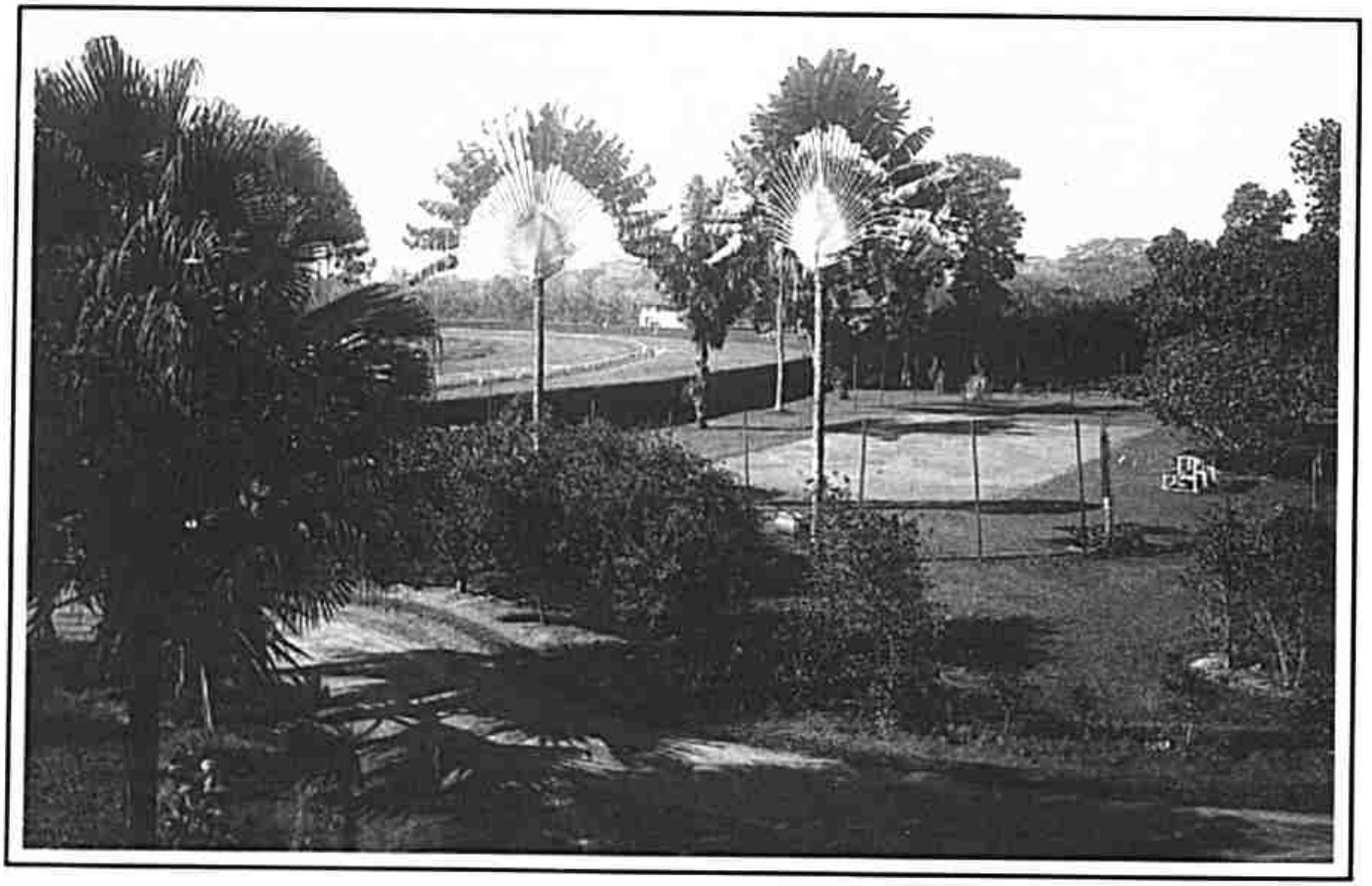
In England, John Russell took a small house with a relative, Dolly Godwin, as his housekeeper and settled down to peaceful retirement, with his pipe, books, and letters.

The fortunes of John's sons during the 1914-18 War may be briefly recorded. George worked in England as an Inspector of Munitions — a highly dangerous task — for which he was awarded an O.B.E. Donald was commissioned into the Royal Engineers and saw action at the battle of Loos before being invalided home.

Archie, Philip and Robert remained in Malaya where they made valuable contributions to the war effort. Apart from fund raising, and charitable work of all kinds, Archie presented an aeroplane to the British Government. By the end of the war, all the sons, except Archie, were married, and John Russell was now a grandfather several times over.

Taken at the Shabeen shortly after George's marriage to Madeleine in 1909. Standing: Archie, Philip, Robert & Donald. Seated: Madeleine, John Russell & George.

In December 1921, Philip died suddenly in Australia from a throat infection, while recuperating from an operation for appendicitis. His wife and young children had remained in Malaya, and the shock to the family may be imagined.



During the closing years of the 1920s, John Russell was living near Richmond, on the outskirts of London. He was now in his seventies and his health was beginning to fail. In December, 1930, he was confined to bed suffering from a kidney complaint. Fortunately, both George and Archie were in London at the time, and arranged special nursing for their father. Despite the finest medical attention, however, John Russell died on the 17th December, 1930, aged 75.

His death was recorded in the *Malay Mail* of 19th December 1930:

'Death of Mr. John Russell

A cable has been received this morning in Kuala Lumpur announcing the death of Mr. John Russell who was for many years in the Government Service here. The news of his death will be received with much regret by his old friends in Selangor, and the sympathy of all will go out to his sons, who are so closely identified with the commercial and business life of British Malaya.

Mr. John Russell was well on in the seventies and had been ailing for some time, but the latest mail news was reassuring. A member of our staff had the pleasure of meeting Mr. John Russell at Richmond in the summer and found him still keenly interested in all Malayan affairs. He was an extremely industrious and capable man. He produced the first magazine to be published in Kuala Lumpur. It was called "The Selangor Journal." *He also played his part in the social life of his town and was for a long time on the Committee of the Selangor Club. Soon after his arrival in this country, he had the misfortune to lose his wife in a carriage accident, and on his shoulders alone fell the task of bringing up a family of five sons, who, with one exception, survived him. It must have been a source of great satisfaction to him that they had all made good positions for themselves. He was a fine man and a good father.'*

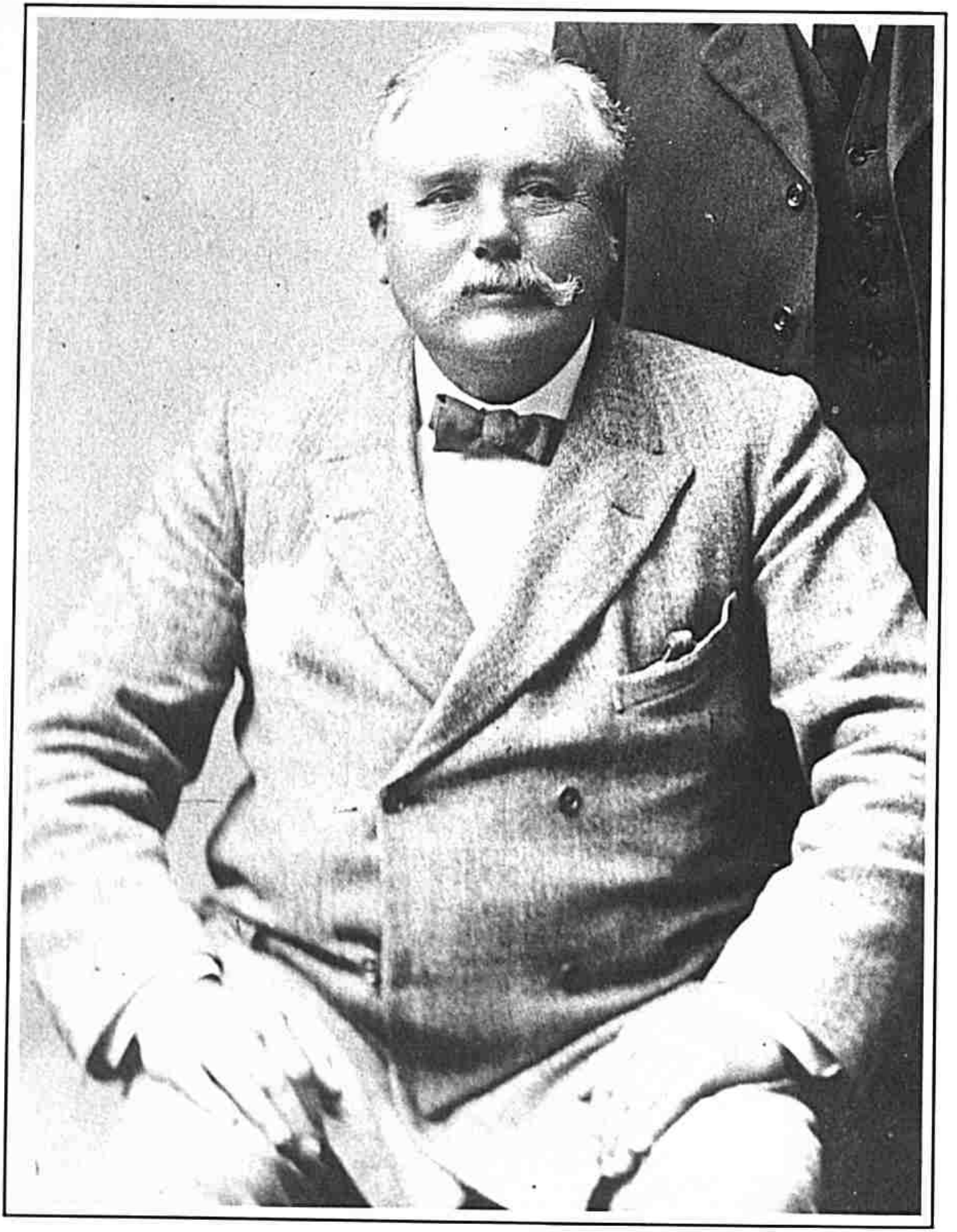
Archie, having been present at his father's death, wrote a long letter to 'Bob' giving details of the final days. It appears that John Russell's end was painless, and perhaps even welcomed by the old man. Archie's letter ends with these words:

'I think that it was father's wish to go as he did. His sight was rapidly failing him and he feared going blind. He also feared having a stroke, or lingering on in a helpless condition. He said that he had had on the whole a full and happy life and was prepared to leave.

'He was a wonderful man, the kindest, most considerate, brave & honest man I have ever known. He also had a very fine intellect, and, in his younger days, was a wonderful worker. But he had no personal ambition apart from pride in his work, and no desire for personal advancement. His generosity was astonishing and only equalled by his sense of honour. I think he was the finest father in the world and I believe that he must have been a good and devoted husband. He left a long lock of mother's hair to be buried with him. It was a beautiful golden brown.

The Shabeen with Robert standing in front with a friend after riding.

The garden of the Shabeen seen from the upstairs verandah overlooking the race course.



'It is hard to understand that we shall not see him in this world again. He was such a lovable man. I think that anybody who ever knew him well must have loved him. God rest his dear soul.

Yours with love,
Archie.

John Russell died exactly a year to the day after the death of Sir Ernest Birch who had appointed him Editor of the Selangor Journal; the success of which has given John a respected place in the literary history of Malaysia.

Appendix

Notes on my Great Grandfather's Family
By Claire Grey

In recent years John Russell's parentage and ancestry has become a subject of speculation amongst his descendants. No such doubt existed in the minds of previous generations, most of whom were familiar with his history and 'unconventional' origins.

I set these out here, backed up by both my own research and that of a professional genealogist. We have found nothing to disprove this history and all our evidence has served to verify it.

Further research will reveal new information and may overthrow some of the assumptions that I've made. However, here is that story as accurately as we can know it today and I hope that it will provide a basis for his descendants to discover more in the future.

Great Grand Parents

John's great grandmother was Elizabeth Lydstone Mugridge, known as Lydstone. She was baptised on July 18 1784 at St Saviours, Dartmouth, Devon. Her mother's name was Ann. Her father Joseph was a naval officer who fought in the war against Napoleon. It is said that he was aboard the first man-of-war that attacked the French at Copenhagen and that a painting of the engagement hangs in Somerset House. He survived the war but on his retirement he was drowned and his boat was lost off Goodwin sands. Family legends says that at the moment of his death his ghost, dressed in dripping oilskins appeared to some sailors on the shore. His two sons, Lydstone's brothers, were also to become naval officers.

Lydstone was married in London on 24 August 1807 at St James Church Westminster. She was 23. She married John Hogg, a jeweller from Perth. None of her family were witnesses to the marriage, although we know that her brother James had his daughter baptised in the same church 6 years later and was living at Archer Street at the time. We can find no records of John Hogg's jewellery business, although we know that women in the family still owned and wore pieces of his work as late as the 1930s. John's mother's maiden name was Graham and her family were to help out Lydstone after her husband's death.

Richard Dearie born in Glasgow in 1801 who is believed to have been John (Jack) Russell's father.

We know little of Lydstone and John Hogg's married life. They had 6 children. The eldest, Elizabeth, was born in London in 1813; Annie in 1815, Georgina in 1818, Agnes in 1822, George Oscar in 1826 and Alfred. Some of the children may have been born in Scotland. Part of the time they lived in Brixham, Devon, or near it. Two poems exist by the Reverend Henry Francis Lyte, (he was famous for "Abide with me" and "Praise my soul the

King of Heaven"); they are dedicated to Agnes and describe her childhood. Rev. Lyte lived in Brixham from 1824 to 1827 and was a friend of the family.

These children and their descendants were to form a large family network of which John and his sons would become part.

History relates that Lydstone's husband died on the same day as her father Joseph. John Hogg was travelling in Scotland and although he appeared in perfect health on the night of his death, he gave instructions that if anything happened to him he was to be buried with a piece of bread he carried because it was 'the last he broke with his wife'. Lydstone is supposed to have woken up the same night and thinking she heard him coming home: she got up to open the door.

Without a husband and with 6 children to support she found the work that many impoverished gentlewomen turned to; she became a schoolmistress. In 1841 at the age of 57 we find her running a school for girls at Belgrave Lodge, in Chiswick London.

The Lodge was next to Belgrave House where the Misses Sophia and Isabella Graham ran a prep school for boys. They lived there with their father William who had retired from the service of the East India Company. We have yet to connect this family with Lydstone's mother-in-law but we believe there to be a link.

Family history has a lot to say about the Grahams who were supposed to be connected to the Duke of Montrose and descended from Robert, King of Scotland. Research had yet to substantiate these claims.

John's Grandmother Elizabeth and Mother Jessie

John's grandmother Elizabeth Hogg, Lydstone's eldest daughter, was not then living with her mother and brothers and sisters. Also known as Eliza, she was very beautiful and was also intelligent. She may have taught at the school at some time since among her pupils were the children of the English Ambassador to Belgium.

Was she unhappy or bored by her occupation, or did she share the same adventurous spirit of her two brothers George and Alfred, one of whom was to become a missionary in China and the other to go gold digging in Australia? Whatever the reason, the story goes that at the age of 20 Eliza ran off with a sailor who eventually abandoned her with their child. She named her natural daughter Jessie Elizabeth, born in 1833.

Jessie was to use the name Smart as her maiden name and we believe this to be the sailor's name. He might have been an officer since there is a note about a Captain Smart on some family papers. Lydstone's sister also married a man called Smart.

Whether Smart took Eliza to America and abandoned her there or whether she went away because of her circumstances is unknown. In the late 1830s she was living there with her daughter Jessie, and by 1838 she had met and married a poet from Glasgow called Richard Dearie.

Richard was born in Glasgow in 1801. His father John was a weaver, an independent and skilled occupation in these years before the industrial revolution. His mother's name was Mary, Margery or Marion King. They were a strict Presbyterian family. Richard had been a brilliant pupil at the school of Sheridan Knowles the playwright. Knowles had a touring company that toured America in 1834 and it is intriguing to imagine Richard's name on a playbill somewhere. However, he may just have been visiting his brother James, who lived in Philadelphia in the 1840s.

Richard was at least 10 years older than Elizabeth and already the father of a large family. We don't know what happened to his first wife, or if Elizabeth took on the care of his children. We do know that they lived in America, probably in Philadelphia, and had at least 3 children there: Maria born in 1838, George in 1840, and Annie in 1842. Jessie was brought up with these children as part of the family.

They returned to England in 1844 and stayed for a brief period at the Chiswick school, with the Hoggs. Another child Donald was born there, surviving only 11 days, to die of constipation. They moved into town to Warren Street where their son Archibald was born; he was to die at 5 months. We find them next in 1851 at Basinghall Street in the City where their son John was born. He was to die of whooping cough at only 8 months at 10 King Square near Old Street. His death was registered by Alexander Dearie, one of Richard's sons by his first marriage. John is the last recorded child of this marriage.

During these 7 years as they frequently moved house, Richard was to style himself in a range of professions. In 1844 he describes himself as a gentleman, by 1846 he is a customs house agent, in 1848 a commission agent, in 1850 a collector to a brewer, in 1851 an inn keeper and wine dealer, by 1860 he is running a lodging house.

Birth of John (Jack) Russell

This brings us to 1854 when the Dearie family was living at 115 Nichols Square, Shoreditch. Jessie was 22 and her half sisters Annie and Maria were 12 and 16. Jessie gave birth to a boy on 16th January 1855 and called her son John Russell. On the birth certificate she names the father as William Russell, Foreign Commission Agent. Was there really a William Russell, and did she marry him? Research has not been able to come up with a marriage certificate or any other trace of him. The family story is that her step-father, Richard Dearie was the father. Richard Dearie was the rate payer of the house in Nichols Square.

Her mother Eliza was 42 at this time. It is unclear whether Jessie and her son John stayed with Richard and Eliza. One theory is that they may have gone to live with relatives in Scotland. John's second youngest son, Donald Russell, maintained that his father had been born in Blair Gowrie and when he was 12 the family moved to London. Annie went to Aunt Georgina's house, to be brought up with her children, and was to stay there until at the age of 21, she married Charles Fox who owned a furniture factory in Finsbury. Richard Dearie was never allowed in the Fox family home. His name was reviled.

Alcohol consumption was banned, to be kept only for medicinal purposes. Years later Annie's children when asked by a guest for a drink, presented him, to his great surprise, with the bottle and a teaspoon. A curious fact is that one of Annie's daughters, May Mossop, christened one of her daughters Madeleine Dearie Mossop, which may indicate a lingering affection or admiration of Richard Dearie or his family, despite the Fox's disapproval of Dearie's drinking. The survival of the name was later emphasised by Madeleine Dearie Mossop marrying George Dearie Russell, of whom more follows.

In 1860 Richard was running a lodging house at 2 Chapel Street West. The road, now called Hertford Street, lies between fashionable Mayfair and the red light district of Shepherd Market, so it is difficult to say what sort of establishment it was. The house is now demolished but if it looked like the houses left standing, it was built of red brick, flat fronted with 3 stories and a sloping attic fourth floor. Street directories show it to be run by a Mrs Russell from 1864 to 1872, about the time when John was twelve. We know that John's mother earned her living by running a hotel, so we think this may be where John spent his early years. The census returns for the street for the years 1861 and 1871, when John would have been 6 and 16 are missing, so if it was his childhood home we don't know the composition of his family. It may have been just himself and his mother.

The Family in America

After 1860, Richard Dearie returned to America. Eliza's fate is unknown. Richard was to run a liquor store with his son George in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, from 1873 to 1876. A photograph taken in old age shows him with cataracts over both eyes, but looking pleased with himself.

In 1857, three sons of Richard's first marriage, Richard, James and Alexander had moved to New Orleans, where they set up their own business as Lock Manufacturers and Bell Hangers. In 1861 when John was six the American Civil War began, and his step-brothers plus George (Eliza's son, who was also living in New Orleans at the time), enlisted to fight for the South. They were all in their 20s.

Richard's eldest son Richard died of wounds received at Federicksburg. George was captured at Gettysburg in 1863. James was captured and Alexander was discharged, both living to return to the family business. George Dearie was probably the person who kept in touch with his sister Annie. Her children remembered his visits to the Fox family house in Beckenham. After the war he worked as clerk in Wilkes Barre in 1871, ran the liquor store with his father and became proprietor of Dearie's Hotel in 1889 but after one or two years returned to being a bar tender. An alcoholic like his father, he died of liver complications at the age of 60 in 1903. His photograph shows a man very similar in appearance to John.

Annie had 5 children with her husband Charles Fox: Gertie, (who we must thank for recording so much of the family history), May, (two of whose children would marry two of John's sons), Charles, Robert and Frank. Annie sent photographs of her small children to Jessie, and Gertie remembered her as a 'sweet woman'.

Relatives in England

John's aunts and uncles were the brothers and sisters of his grandmother Eliza Hogg. George Oscar has been educated at the school in Chiswick by his mother and sisters. He was however very poor and decided to go to Australia to make his fortune gold digging, but returned to England before the Gold Rush and missed his chance to make a fortune. In 1864 he met and married Sarah Penny, whose face was pitted with small pox but who was a very astute business woman. Her father owned a wool and art needlework shop in Goodge Street and had built one of the first house in New Malden: Beaulah Villa. In fact it had caused his death since he had fallen from the scaffolding during its construction. In 1866 Oscar and Sarah moved in. Oscar was a very kind hearted man and having no children of his own he cared for his sister Agnes' son Archie.

Agnes had taught in the Chiswick school and worked as a governess before marrying, in 1861, Archie Rough, a commercial traveller. They lived in Blair Gowrie, Perth. Their only son Archie was born in 1862. Archie senior was to die two years later at the age of 37. Agnes went back to work, this time for Lord David Cecil and after his death she lived as a companion with his widow Lady Sophia for 40 years. Her son Archie Rough was 'adopted' by Uncle Oscar and Aunt Sarah and later when he married Emily Brown in 1872 they continued to live in the house in New Malden. When George Oscar died, Aunt Sarah ran the shop; travelling to town daily on the 8 o'clock train. The shop in Goodge Street was on the route from Buckingham Palace to Liverpool Street Station. When the Royal Party went past to get the train to Sandringham, Aunt Sarah would go out and curtsey. On her death the shop passed to Archie. It was Archie who is supposed to have helped persuade John to go to Malaya.

Annie Hogg, sister to Agnes and Oscar, also a teacher at Chiswick, married an accountant called William Godwin. Their only son William was born at Turnham Green in 1846, and later lived in Merton, near New Malden. He married and had 8 children including Dolly. The Roughs always laughed at the Godwins who were considered rather helpless, however it was with his cousin Dolly (despite her lack of dress sense!) that John would spend the last years of his life.

John's early years

We don't know where John went to school. School attendance was not compulsory till 1876 when he was 21. Perhaps he was educated by his teacher relations, or perhaps he went to a local church school.

He was born in the middle of Queen Victoria's reign, when nearly a quarter of the world population belonged to the British Empire. The Crimean War had just ended and it was a time of comparative peace abroad. At home, however, there was enormous social change, with riots taking place over the right to vote, which was only extended to working men in towns when John was 12. It was the London of Charles Dickens and if you survived a cholera epidemic, and you weren't poor it was an exciting time to grow up. Many inventions were made or put into wider use during his youth including iron

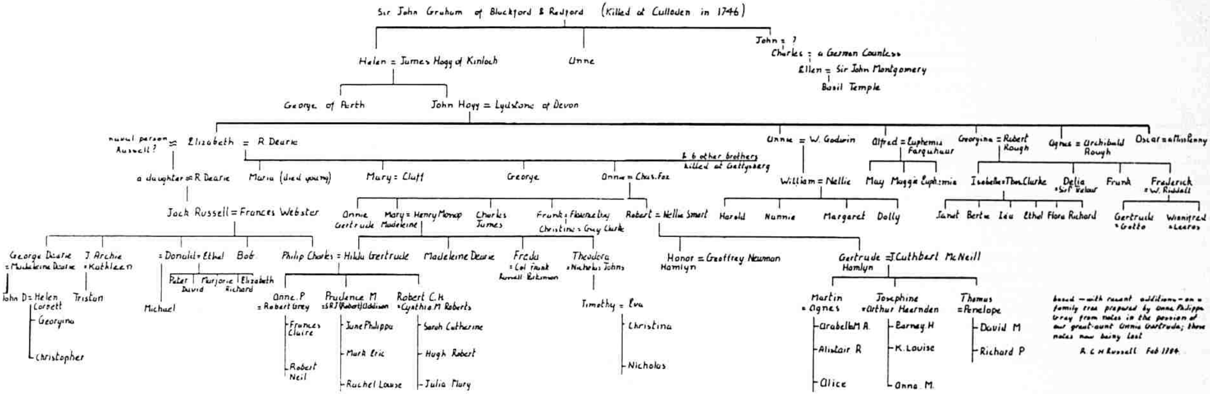
steamships, typewriters, the telephone, phonograph, and bicycle. Also new machines for composing printer's type brought down the cost of newspapers, just at the time when compulsory schooling meant that more people could read them.

John was apprenticed as a printer and compositor. Possibly this was arranged by Uncle Oscar. He met his future wife when he was a lodger at her parent's house. Her father Walter Webster was a clerk and her uncle George a reporter then a very respectable profession. It is thought they lived in Clerkenwell.

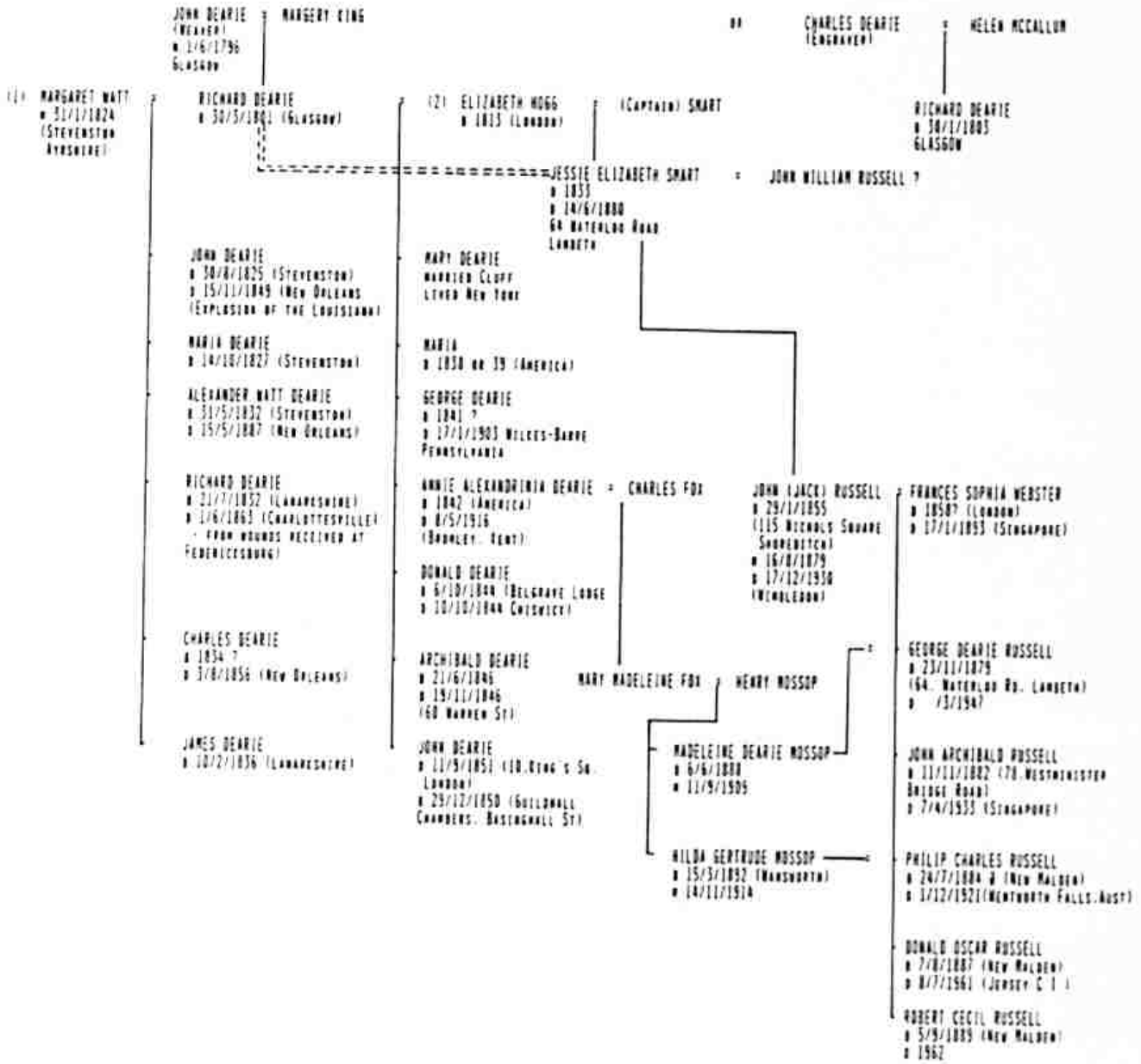
John and Frances lived together at 64 Waterloo Road. His mother Jessie lived with them. Their marriage took place in Lambeth Registry Office on 16 August 1879: Frances was 21 and John was 24. Jessie lived to see the birth of her grandson and his first 10 months of life before she died of tuberculosis on 14th June, 1880, at the early age of 47. John and Frances named their son George Dearie Russell. Was this John's desire to make his origins clear? Their second son Archie was born at 78 Westminster Bridge Road on Nov 11 1882.

Because his uncle and aunt had lived in New Malden for the past 16 years, John must have visited it often and decided it would be a better place to bring up a family. Did George help him out or was it a higher paid job that enabled him to be a commuter? They moved to South View Villa, Elm Road, a central one of 10 cottages facing the school. Their three youngest were born there: Philip Charles in 1884 (the writer's grandfather), Donald Oscar in 1887, (possibly after Uncle Oscar who was ill and died 5 months later) and Robert Cecil in 1889. The following year they would leave for Kuala Lumpur.

John, known to his family as Jack, was 6 feet tall. He had a stupendous constitution and a well developed sense of humour. He was called "Fuzzy" because he was fussy, he disliked disorder and insisted on good behaviour from his children. The captain of the ship that took them to Malaya congratulated him on their good behaviour. He had a sense of style and dressed well. He had an appetite for food and drink. By the time of his retirement he was so large that his cousin Dolly would drive with him in the back of her little car. He drank a great deal, boasting of a bottle of whisky a day since the age of 30. When in England he would order 12 bottles from Berry Brothers in St James. They cost 48 shillings. Clearly he had loved Frances and said that he had turned to alcohol on her death. He kept a lock of her hair to be buried with him when he died, on 17th December 1930 in London.



Sir John Graham of Blackford & Redford (Killed at Culloden in 1746)
Helen = James Hogg of Kinloch
Anne
John = ?
Charles = a German Countess
Ellen = Sir John Montgomery
Basil Temple
George of Perth
John Hogg = Lydstone of Devon
Elizabeth = R Dearie
Anne = W. Godwin
Alfred = Euphemia Farquhaur
Georgina = Robert Rough
Agnes = Archibald Rough
& 6 other brothers killed at Gettysberg
a daughter = R Dearie
Maria (died young)
Mary = Cluff
George
Anne = Chas. Fox
William = Nellie
May
Maggie
Euphemia
Frank
Frederick = W. Riddall
Jack Russell = Frances Webster
Annie Gertrude
Mary = Henry Monap Madeleine
Charles James
Robert = Nellie Smart
Harold
Nannie
Margaret
Dolly
Janet
Bertie
Ida
Ethel
Flora
Richard
George Dearie = Madeleine Dearie
J. Archie = Kathleen
= Donald = Ethel
Bob
Philip Charles = Hilda Gertrude
Madeleine Dearie
Freda = Col Frank Russell Parkinson
Theodora = Nicholas Johns
Honor = Geoffrey Newman Hamlyn
Gertrude = J Cuthbert McNeill Hamlyn
Peter David
Marjorie Richard
Elizabeth
John D = Helen Corbett
Triston
Michael
Anne. P = Robert Grey
Prudence M
Robert C.H = Cynthia M Roberts
Timothy = Eva
Martin = Agnes
Josephine = Arthur Haernden
Thomas = Penelope
Georgina
Christopher
Frances Claire
Robert Neil
June Philippa
Mark Eric
Rachel Louise
Sarah Catherine
Hugh Robert
Julia Mary
Christina
Nicholas
Arabella M. A.
Alistair R
Alice
Barney H
K. Louise
Anna. M.
David M
Richard P
based — with recent additions — on a family tree prepared by Anne Philippa Gray from notes in the possession of our great-aunt Annie Gertrude; these notes now being lost
R. C. M. Russell Feb 1984


JOHN DEARIE (WEAVER) b 1/6/1796 GLASGOW
= MARGERY KING
(1) MARGARET WATT b 31/1/1824 (STEVENSTON AYRSHIRE)
RICHARD DEARIE b 30/5/1801 (GLASGOW)
(2) ELIZABETH HOGG b 1813 (LONDON)
(Captain) SMART
JESSIE ELIZABETH SMART b 1853 b 14/6/1880 64 WATERLOO ROAD LAMBETH
JOHN WILLIAM RUSSELL ?
JOHN DEARIE b 30/8/1825 (STEVENSTON) b 15/11/1849 (NEW ORLEANS (EXPLOSION OF THE LOUISIANA)
MARY DEARIE MARRIED CLUFF LIVED NEW YORK
MARIA DEARIE b 14/10/1827 (STEVENSTON)
MARIA b 1830 OR 39 (AMERICA)
ALEXANDER WATT DEARIE b 31/5/1832 (STEVENSTON) b 15/5/1887 (NEW ORLEANS)
GEORGE DEARIE b 184] ? b 17/1/1903 WILKES-BARRE PENNSYLVANIA
RICHARD DEARIE b 21/7/1852 (LANARKSHIRE) b 1/6/1863 (CHARLOTTESVILLE - FROM WOUNDS RECEIVED AT FREDERICKSBURG)
ANNIE ALEXANDRINA DEARIE b 1842 (AMERICA) b 8/5/1916 (BROMLEY, KENT)
= CHARLES FOX
JOHN (JACK) RUSSELL b 29/1/1855 (115 NICHOLS SQUARE SHOREDITCH) b 16/8/1879 b 17/12/1930 (WIMBLEDON)
FRANCES SOPHIA WEBSTER b 1858? (LONDON) b 17/1/1893 (SINGAPORE)
DONALD DEARIE b 6/10/1844 (BELGRAVE LODGE b 10/10/1844 CHISWICK)
CHARLES DEARIE b 1834 ? b 3/8/1856 (NEW ORLEANS)
ARCHIBALD DEARIE b 21/6/1836 b 19/11/1846 (60 WARREN ST)
MARY MADELEINE FOX
HENRY MOSSOP
GEORGE DEARIE RUSSELL b 23/11/1879 (64 WATERLOO RD. LAMBETH) b /3/1947
JAMES DEARIE b 10/2/1836 (LANARKSHIRE)
JOHN DEARIE b 11/5/1851 (10 KING'S SQ LONDON) b 29/12/1850 (GUILDHALL CHAMBERS, BASINGHALL ST)
MADELEINE DEARIE MOSSOP b 6/6/1888 b 11/9/1909
JOHN ARCHIBALD RUSSELL b 11/11/1882 (78 WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD) b 7/4/1933 (SINGAPORE)
HILDA GERTRUDE MOSSOP b 15/5/1892 (WANDSWORTH) b 14/11/1914
PHILIP CHARLES RUSSELL b 24/7/1884 d (NEW MALDEN) b 1/12/1921(KENTWORTH FALLS,AUST)
DONALD OSCAR RUSSELL b 7/8/1887 (NEW MALDEN) b 8/7/1961 (JERSEY C I)
ROBERT CECIL RUSSELL b 5/9/1889 (NEW MALDEN) d 1962

Subsequent notes giving the result of further research into the Dearie side of the family.
By Tristan Russell

Claire Grey's notes on family history need to be looked at in conjunction with the two family trees here re-produced.

The first was compiled in 1984 based on notes prepared by Annie Gertrude Fox and represent what was known then. We know it is inaccurate, but it serves to show Elizabeth Hogg's side of the family.

The second tree was compiled in March 1993, about two years after Claire wrote her notes, and represents what we know now about Jack Russell's family background. There are also some uncertainties about this tree. The first arises from the fact that there were two Richard Dearies, obviously cousins, born in Glasgow in 1801 and 1803. We don't yet know which is our man. We also have no certain proof yet whether the Richard Dearie who was married to Margaret Watt was the same Richard Dearie who was married to Elizabeth Hogg but the evidence seems to point to this. Originally, all we had to go on was the family story that Richard Dearie had six sons killed at Gettysburg. Elizabeth Hogg was too young to have been their mother, so a previous marriage was suspected. Recent research in America has revealed the arrival of Mrs Dearie, without her husband, but with five sons, John, Alexander Watt, Richard, Charles and James in New Orleans in 1836 from Scotland aboard a bark called the Agnes and Anne. The eldest son John was killed in 1849 by the calamitous explosion of the boilers of a Mississippi river boat called the Louisiana in New Orleans. His death certificate revealed that his parents were Richard Dearie and Margaret Watt and that his uncle was John Watt, Margaret's brother. John Watt, also born in Scotland, was a cotton factor in the firm of Watt & De Saulles. He was evidently resident in America before his sister Mrs Dearie's arrival. His own children were born in Mississippi, probably Natchez. We have traced the marriage of Richard Dearie and Margaret Watt to Stevenston in Ayrshire in 1824 and the birth of their elder children in the same parish and the younger ones in Lanarkshire.

Charles Dearie died in New Orleans aged about 22 in 1856 but the other brothers Alexander Watt, Richard and James appear in city street directories. They worked in the firm of Dearie and Brother, listed as lock manufacturers and bell hangers.

In the Civil War which broke out in 1861, all three surviving brothers served in the Confederate Army. James Dearie enlisted on the 26th of May 1861 as a Sergeant in the Washington Artillery, Louisiana at the stated age of 24. He was discharged from this unit in November of the same year by special order of General Beauregard and enrolled as a captain in Milee Legion Louisiana Militia. He was captured at Port Hudson, Louisiana in July 1863 and was sent near Baton Range in August 1864 for exchange from New Orleans. Richard Dearie enlisted on 7th June 1861 in the 7th Louisiana Infantry at Camp Moore at the stated age of 27. In the course of service he was promoted from Sergeant to 1st Lieutenant. He died of wounds received at Federicksburg on 1st June 1863. Alexander enlisted as a private in Company C. Crescent Regiment of the Louisiana Regiment, probably for the defence of

Prepared by T.B. Russel in 1993 following a visit to New Orleans.

New Orleans which fell to the Union Army early in the war. He was reported on the roll for May and June 1862 as absent under arrest. Alexander and James returned to civilian life in New Orleans after the war. There are Dearies living in New Orleans to this day with fourteen listed in the telephone directory.

Very interestingly, a twenty-one year old George Dearie enlisted as private in the 5th Louisiana Infantry at Camp Moore on 4th June 1861 in New Orleans. We are fairly certain that he must have been the same George Dearie who is recorded in family history and who died in Wilkes Barre in 1903. We think he must have been a son of the second marriage and provides a link between the two families. He had probably come to join his half-brothers in the adventure of war. He was captured at Bottom Bridge, Virginia on 24th May 1862 sent to Fort Columbus, New York Harbour and exchanged at Aikens Landing, Virginia in 1862. He was captured again at Berlin, Virginia on 1st July 1863 and paroled at Fort McHenry, Maryland on 6th July 1863 and was apparently thereafter sent to Fort Delaware. The Confederate Army record shows him as having deserted to the enemy near Getrysburg in July 1863.

At the time of the 1851 census Richard Dearie and Elizabeth Hogg were living at Guildhall Chambers Basinghall St., City of London and details of the family were given as follows:-

Richard Dearie	Head Inkeeper	Born Glasgow Scotland	Age 49
Eliza Dearie	Wife	Born London	Age 38
Jessie Dearie	Daughter Unmarried	Age 18	
Maria Dearie	Daughter Unmarried	Born America	Age 12
Annie Dearie	Daughter Unmarried	Born America	Age 9
John Dearie	Son Unmarried	Born London	Age 3 months

Plus 3 servants and 2 lodgers

If George was a son of the second marriage, it is a mystery where he was at this time. He would have been about 10 or 11 and if Maria and Annie were born in America, it is likely that he was also. Claire Grey has found two photographs of George, one taken in Bromley Kent in 1859 and captioned George Dearie aged 18. The other shows him much older and is captioned "Mama's brother George" (Mama being Annie Alexander Dearie). It shows a striking resemblance to Jack Russell, though thinner and sadder looking. A descendant of Annie Alexander says that her father remembered George visiting them at Roslyn House in Bromley, coming over in fine style but having to work his passage back as a stoker. This may have been when he had his photo taken at 18.

Another possible connection between the two families is that when John Dearie died at the age of about 10 months on 11th September 1851 at 10 King's Square, London, the name of the informant was Alex W Dearie. It seems very likely that this was Alexander Watt Dearie over on a visit from New Orleans.

Jesse was Elizabeth Hogg's daughter by her liaison with Smart. Unfortunately, we don't know where she was born or anything about Smart except that he may have been a ship captain.

John Russell was born on 29th January 1855 at 115, Nichols Square, Shoreditch and on the birth certificate his mother's name was given as Jesse Russell formerly Smart and the father was William Russell, Foreign Commission Agent. We have not been able to find any record of a marriage between William Russell and Jesse Smart nor any trace of existence of William Russell before or after John Russell's birth. The family story is that Richard Dearie was his father but whether this is true or not is impossible to know for certain. However, if Richard Dearie was his real father and if the Richard Dearie who married Margaret Watt was the same man who later married Elizabeth Hogg then all the Dearie boys we have been looking at were John Russell's half-brothers.

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