Memoirs of a Menteri Besar

≈ *Early Days* ≈

Tan Sri Datuk Dr. Mohamad Said

P.M.N., D.S.N.S., D.P.N.S., P.P.T.

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1923–1938

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Abbreviations

A.D.O.	Assistant District Officer
Ar.	Arabic
B.R.	British Residents
B.W.I.R.	British West Indies Rifles
D.O.	District Officer
F.M.S.	Federated Malay States
F.M.V.F.	Federated Malay States Volunteer Force
M.A.S.	Malay Administrative Service
M.C.K.K.	Malay College, Kuala Kangsar
M.C.S.	Malayan Civil Service
M.V.I.	Malay Volunteer Infantry
N.S.T.	New Straits Times
O.C.P.D.	Officer-in-Charge — Police District
P.A.S.	A Malay political party, the main platform of which is to make Malaysia a theocracy
Prep.	Preparatory
P.U.O.	Pyrexia (fever) of Unknown Origin
P.W.D.	Public Works Department
R.A.F.	Royal Air Force
S.R.	Secretary to Resident
S.S.	Straits Settlements
S.I.T.C.	Sultan Idris Training College
U.D.A.	Urban Development Authority
U.M.N.O.	United Malays National Organization

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In the course of writing this autobiography of my childhood and school days, I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to several persons who have in various ways helped me in my self-imposed task: first and foremost Tun Mohamed Suffian whose constant nagging and encouragement finally triumphed over my initial unwillingness to commit myself to writing an autobiography; Haji Mohamed Yusof bin Ahmad for supplying me with relevant genealogical data about my ancestry, and for the loan of several books which I have found useful as *aides-memoire;* my two childhood playmates, Datuk Laksamana Abdul Kuddus bin Mohamed Fathullah and Haji Khalid bin Endut for reminding me of various incidents during our school days in Linggi; my good friend, Dr. Cheah Boon Kheng, formerly a feature writer on the staff of the NST and now a lecturer at the Pusat Pengajian Ilmu Kemanusiaan, Universiti Sains Malaysia, who very kindly visited me in Seremban 1973, and encouraged me to contribute articles to the *Straits Times* and the *Sunday Times,* and later urged me to get my series of ten articles on my old school, the M.C.K.K., published in book form; Tan Sri Lee Siew Yee, NST Group Editor, who kindly accepted these articles for publication; Mr. P.C. Shivadas, Editor of the *Sunday Times,* who willingly gave me his permission to reproduce most of the M.C.K.K. series; Cik Adibah Amin of the NST, whose very flattering appreciation of the series had the fortuitous effect of reinforcing Tun Suffian's pertinacity in urging me to write an autobiography; Encik Wan Abdul Aziz bin Wan Hamzah, the incumbent Principal of the M.C.K.K., for sending me two photos of the Malay College during my time.

Lastly, I would like to thank Mrs. Wee Kim Swee, Madam Goh Gee Pong and Mrs. Linda Christie for very kindly typing the amended version of my draft manuscript, when they had more pressing demands on their time.

Preface

On Monday, 31 October 1978, my 71st birthday, I reluctantly took up my pen to begin writing my autobiography. I use the word "reluctantly" advisedly because I am undertaking this self-imposed task not of my own volition, but in response to the oft-repeated urging of a dear old friend of mine, Tun Mohamed Suffian, the Lord President and Head of the Malaysian Judiciary, aided and abetted by His Lordship's wife, Toh Puan Bunny, whose equally persistent persuasions made it extremely difficult for me to invent further excuses for not agreeing to write an autobiography of sorts.

Furthermore in his last letter but one, Tun Suffian wrote, *inter alia*, as follows:

> By the way, how is your autobiography getting on? Is it finished? If you like I can arrange for it to be typed and to be offered to my publisher friends here.
>
> If you have not finished it, I *implore* you to do so. You write so well and the young will surely profit from reading about your experience and from advice that you care to give. So few Malays can write and those that can, should.

Now, apropos of the word "implore", I believe I am right in saying that to implore anyone to do something is tantamount to begging him to do it, and I am not such a callous person as to turn a deaf ear to such pleadings from a friend of thirty-one years standing, whom I regard as one of Malaysia's greatest "sons of the soil".

I have, therefore, at long last decided to write my autobiography. I am, however, fully aware of the fact that I have so far written nothing that I can really be proud of. My sporadic writings have in fact consisted of ephemeral letters to the press, an inaccurate translation of Wilkinson's *Sungai Ujong*, a partial one of Parr and McRay's *Rembau*, a prose translation of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (unpublished), two articles in *Dewan Bahasa*, two in *The Malayan Medical Journal*, and lastly, a series of ten articles about my old school, the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar, the first of which was published in the *Sunday*

Times of 9 December 1973 and the rest in subsequent issues of the same newspaper.

As the writing of a good autobiography is a much more demanding task than the writing of newspaper articles or of papers for publication in medical journals and requires of the autobiographer a literary talent of a higher order, I am by no means confident that I shall be able to write even a readable one, let alone a masterpiece like Bertrand Russell's three-volume autobiography, begun a couple of years before the age of ninety and completed when he was well past that age.

However, quite apart from the above consideration, the one really compelling reason why I have hitherto fought shy of writing a full-length autobiography is the fact that the kind that I would rather write is one like the two-volume *Confessions of Jean Jacques Rousseau* or the three-volume *Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*.

In both autobiographies, "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" is told about the authors themselves, about other people, and about the events that occurred in their lifetimes.

I do not think, however, that it is either wise or desirable for me to write such an autobiography. For one thing, I believe that no publisher in Malaysia would accept it for publication in its entirety. For another, even if a publisher could be found for it, the book would be pretty certain to provoke a howl of angry protests from those who would consider themselves unjustly maligned, and a spate of intemperate abuse from those who would have been made to "see themselves as others see them".

Unlike Jean Jacques Rousseau or Bertrand Russell, I am not so great a man and a writer that I can bear with equanimity adverse public criticism of my religious views and my extremely censorious attitude of mind in respect of certain public figures, including high-ranking politicians, government officers, religious leaders, customary and honorary Datuks alike.

Therefore, in order not to disappoint Tun Mohamed Suffian, I have decided to compromise by recording in my private diary "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" about myself, about other people, and about the various happenings that have occurred during my lifetime.

As my diary is not meant for publication, I am sure that Tun Suffian, "the onlie begetter" of this autobiography, will agree

with me that my decision is the best possible course for me to adopt and that it is only by doing so that I can expect to live at peace with the rest of mankind for the remaining years of my life. Amen.

1981

Tan Sri Datuk Dr. Mohamad Said,
P.M.N., D.S.N.S., D.P.N.S., P.P.T.

Introduction

Tan Sri Dr. Mohamad Said has asked me to write an introduction to his autobiography. As an old friend for more than half a century I cannot but oblige. However, as it isn't clear to me whether I am to introduce the author or his book to the prospective reader, I shall attempt both.

The Man

It was way back in 1925, when he joined the King Edward VII College of Medicine, Singapore that I first became acquainted with him. Although I was one year his senior at College we stayed together in the F.M.S. Hostel and soon became pals. He made a delightful companion and could discourse on a wide range of subjects as he was both well read and broad-minded. He was gentle by nature and very courteous and polite in his dealings with one and all. He represented the best of real kampung Malay gentry polished by the Etonian atmosphere of Kuala Kangsar College.

It soon became evident to his fellow students that he was very widely read and had a good command of the English language and he was elected year after year to serve on the Council of the student body, the Medical College Union, first in the capacity of Literary Secretary and later as the Editor of the College Magazine. He was very successful as Editor and obviously enjoyed his work very much. At one stage he was offered the Vice-Presidency of the Students' Union but he preferred to remain as Editor.

He was popular with everyone and had no known enemies and I consider myself privileged to belong to his circle of close friends. Not an outstanding sportsman he nevertheless played some football, tennis and cricket in College. He was a good student and his academic career was marked with distinction throughout the years with the exception of a period of six months when he had a breakdown in health.

Upon graduation from the college, he joined the Government Medical Department and served a number of years as the Assistant Medical Officer-in-charge at the Pekan District Hospital

in Pahang. During this period, he rendered invaluable assistance in a research survey on the incidence of elephantiasis among the kampung folk along the banks of the Pahang River. With more leisure he could devote his time to more reading and playing social tennis with the Government Officers and members of the Pahang Royal Family. He also learned to ride horses and to play polo.

He won the Queen's Fellowship in 1941 but like me (who also was awarded the Queen's Fellowship) he had to wait till after the War to take advantage of the award. We had the opportunity of once again being closely associated together in the United Kingdom where we were both engaged in pursuing postgraduate courses. He was pursuing a course in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene while I was working for a Ph.D. of the London University at the London School of Tropical Medicine. This gave us ample opportunity to renew our friendship. We stayed together in the same hotel in Bedford Square and shared our leisure hours in the pursuit of our common interests. While in U.K. he became a Licentiate in Midwifery at the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin. On his return to Malaya he served as a Medical Officer in Seremban and later he was Clinical Specialist in Obstetrics at the General Hospital, Seremban, for six years. He retired from Government Medical Service and set up a private practice in Seremban.

Always keen to help his fellow Malays to better their lot, he felt that he could do something for them by becoming a politician. He was duly elected and served meritoriously as Menteri Besar of Negri Sembilan for a period of ten years (1959 to 1969) afterwhich he retired from active politics. He now enjoys his retirement reading, writing, bird-watching and jogging.

Over the years he has devoted some of his time to serve on the Councils of the University of Malaya and the Muslim College, Klang. The first Vice-President of the Malaysian Government Pensioners Association, he believes with Robert Browning's Rabi ben Ezra "Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be".

The State awarded him the PPT and the title of Datuk Setia Perkasa and the Federal Government the title of Tan Sri by making him the Panglima Mangku Negara (P.M.N.). He was conferred the honorary D. Litt. by the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur in 1976.

Besides two articles in the Malayan Medical Journal, his publications include the translation of Wilkinson's *Sungai Ujong* into Bahasa Malaysia and a partial translation of Parr and McRay's *Rembau* which was published in *Majallah Guru*. His prose translation of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* has yet to be published. He has also contributed a series of articles on the Kuala Kangsar College of his secondary school days to the *Sunday Times*, the first of which appeared on 9 December 1973. It is only fitting and appropriate that the series should now be complemented by a second book on his childhood and school days.

The Book

I haven't the least hesitation in saying that Tan Sri Dr. Mohamad Said's autobiography is a most readable and interesting account of the life of an outstanding Malay. I found the book fascinating. Although I know Tan Sri Dr. Said well enough, he was already 17 years of age when I first met him and it was for the first time, as I perused the manuscript that I came to learn of his early days at the turn of the century in Kampung Linggi in Negri Sembilan, his life as a schoolboy in the Malay School there and subsequently at the Kuala Kangsar Malay College.

He has a good memory for past events and remembers with affection his many boyhood friends and their nicknames. His attempt at justifying the first-cousin marriages practised in Linggi in those days, his vivid descriptions of a Malay wedding, kite-flying, the snaring of turtle doves, birds liming, the exploits of the marauding man-eating tiger and other incidents, all make very interesting reading. To me, many of these experiences are new. I was surprised to learn of the importance assigned to local tradition and the great influence wielded by the heads of religion and tribal chiefs.

Tan Sri Dr. Said was fortunate in the headmasters and teachers (mostly expatriates from British universities) at the Kuala Kangsar College. Being a school for sons of the elite of the day and being a boarding school with relatively few students, the contact between staff and students was good and Tan Sri Dr. Said seems to have made good use of his opportunities. His love for literature, kindled by enthusiastic teachers, has helped to widen his horizon and mould his character. The result

is an autobiography that will be of interest to Malaysians as well as others who wish to know something of the background and life of an outstanding Malay. They will at the same time derive great pleasure reading something of considerable literary merit.

Professor A.A. Sandosham

Chapter One

My Heredity and Environment

I was born at Kampung Tengah, Linggi, on 31 October 1907, on what day and at what hour I was not told by my mother, Hajjah Majidah binti Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Peral, so that should an astrologer be foolish enough to cast my horoscope he would be pretty certain to botch it. All the satisfaction that I can derive from being born on 31 October is that I am supposed to be a Scorpio man with all the character traits and potentialities attributed to those born under the influence of this sign of the Zodiac.

Having been trained as a doctor, I am inclined to deride astrology as a pseudo-science which should be summarily rejected by the scientificially-trained, if not by all educated men and women.

It is well-known, however, that the miraculous happenings described in the sacred books of the great religions of the world are not amenable to proof by means of the processes of reasoning generally employed by educated persons who lack the firm, unwavering faith of true believers.

I am therefore obliged to keep an open mind about astrology, especially as some Indian astrologers are reputed to have an uncanny faculty for foretelling correctly what the future has in store for their clients by casting their horoscopes.

I was the second son born by my mother. My elder brother, Abdul Razak, was born two years before me. He died in early infancy of an illness which, from the symptoms described to me later by my mother, must have been caused by the syndrome so well-known among doctors and dubbed by them as "diarrhoea and vomiting". In those days it was a fearful scourge which exacted a very heavy toll of infant lives.

The house in which I was born is one of the bigger types of houses in Linggi. The main part of the house, known as the *tengah rumah*, has sixteen pillars with four additional pillars to support the *anjong*, the room annexed to the *serambi*, or the long nar-

row verandah.

The smaller part of the house, at one end of which the kitchen range is placed, has twelve pillars with additional pillars to support the kitchen range itself.

Both parts were roofed with *atap genting* or tiles. As usual with Malay houses of this type, the *pelantar* which separated the two parts of the house was unroofed and several large *tempayan* or jars are placed under the eaves as receptacles for rain-water or water fetched from the well.

It is one of the oldest houses in Linggi. My maternal grandmother, Siti Zaleha, generally known to the children of my generation as Tok Iti, and all of her brothers and sisters were born there.

The house originally belonged to her father, Abdul Samad alias Tok Keling. When my grandfather, Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Peral, married my grandmother, he bought the house with its surrounding *kampung* land from his father-in-law, Tok Keling. He then renovated it so as to make it a fitting residence for a Dato' Muda who was reputed to be one of the richest chiefs in Negri Sembilan in the second half of the nineteenth century.*

On my mother's side of the family genealogical tree, I can trace my ancestry to both ancestors of the Linggi people, Tok Awaludin and his elder sister, Tok Serilah, who, together with their children, migrated from Riau to Penajis, Rembau, in 1775.†

My maternal grandfather, Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Peral, was the son of Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Salleh, who had married Halima-tus-Sa'adiah, the youngest daughter of Jeragan Abdul Rahman. Jeragan Abdul Rahman was the second Linggi chief, and the youngest son of Tok Awaludin by his second wife Tok Fatimah, nicknamed Tok Pipit because of the two *lesung pipit* or dimples adorning her cheeks whenever she smiled.

Jeragan Abdul Rahman was succeeded by Dato' Muda

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* It is sad to record that this old house is the only one remaining of about a dozen Linggi houses of a similar type. The rest have fallen into ruin. Since my mother's death in 1963, this house has been abandoned and no doubt in the course of time it will share the fate of the others.

† See R.J. Wilkinson's, "Sungai Ujong", *JSBRAS*, 1921, p. 139.
Also J.M. Gullick's, "Sungai Ujong", *JMBRAS*, 1949, pp. 58 and 59.

Mohamad Atas, generally known as Tok Muda Katas by the Linggi people. He and Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Salleh were first cousins and the nephews of Jeragan Abdul Rahman. He had married his cousin Nafisah, the elder daughter of Jeragan Abdul Rahman.

My father, Mohamed, was a direct descendant of Tok Awaludin:

Tok Awaludin m. Tok Embong (his first wife)
|
Khatib Jamaludin
|
Khatib Musa
|
Mohamed Yusof
|
Mohamed (my father)

There must have coursed in his veins the blood of Tok Serilah as well, for consanguineous marriages have been so common in Linggi since its founding that he must have inherited traits from both the spear and the distaff sides of the family genealogical tree.

Consanguineous marriages are generally considered undesirable from a medical or biological point of view, in that they have been conclusively proved to cause the transmission of what doctors, biologists and anthropologists describe as "recessive" traits to the offspring of such marriages.

These recessive traits manifest themselves in the form of diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, etc., as well as physical characteristics, defects and deformities.

Besides hereditary diseases, I believe that the transmission of both dominant and recessive genes is the probable cause of the peculiar character traits noticeable in quite a number of the descendants of Tok Awaludin and his elder sister Tok Serilah. These character traits transform them into cranks, crackpots, buffoons, skinflints, recluses, eccentrics, etc. There seems to be an abnormal number of such peculiar people among the descendants of Tok Awaludin and Tok Serilah.

Another generally held view is that several generations of consanguineous marriages inevitably lead to a deterioration of the original stock from which the members of a community are derived.

On the other hand, Professor E. Adamson Hoebel, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Minnesota, does not sub-

scribe to this view. In his book, *Man in the Primitive World*• he asserts:

> The fact is, however, that in-breeding does not necessarily produce physical deterioration. It depends on the nature of the inbreeding stock. Inbreeding does no more than intensify the traits that the stock possessed at the outset. Recessive traits have a better chance of somatic realisation where inbreeding is marked. If undesirable recessives are in the stock, they may well come to the fore and deterioration may result. *Nevertheless, it is equally true that inbreeding intensifies the influence of dominant traits. A stock with desirable dominants becomes stronger.*

Professor Hoebel cites the instance of the mountain-dwellers of Kentucky and states:

> The populations of some pocketed valleys have been observed to send young men and women of consistently superior mentality to Berea College. The populations of other pocketed valleys in the same area are distinguished for the occurrence of epilepsy and a plethora of morons. Cleopatra, the last of the Ptolemies, product of twelve generations of brother-sister marriages, was hardly a specimen of physical deterioration, whatever may be said of her morals.

It is probable that in the case of the pocketed valleys, the populations of which have been observed to send young men and women of consistently superior mentality to Berea College, the dominant genes transmitted to them by their parents have counteracted the effects of the recessive genes simultaneously transmitted to them.

In the case of the pocketed valleys where there was a plethora of morons and epileptics, their parents most probably did not possess any desirable dominant genes to transmit to their children to counteract the adverse effects of the recessive genes transmitted to them.

The findings of Professor Hoebel appear to be applicable to the *luak* of Sungai Ujong, of which the Dato' Klana is the *undang* or ruling chief; the Bugis enclave of Linggi in this particular *luak* has so far produced more university graduates than any other part of Sungai Ujong. It is an undisputed fact that the three Negri Sembilan Malays who were the first to qualify as doctors

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• E.A. Hoebel, *Man in the Primitive World*, McGraw-Hill Book Co., p. 289, undated.

came from Linggi, all three of them the offspring of consanguineous marriages.

I was the first Negri Sembilan Malay to qualify as a doctor in March 1932, to be followed six years later by the late Dr. Sulaiman, and eight years later by Dr. Abdullah. All three of us were closely related to one another, Dr. Sulaiman's mother being a first cousin of mine and both Dr. Abdullah's father and mother being first cousins of my mother's.

In the next generation, my son Yusof obtained his M.B.B.S. at the University of Singapore in 1970 and Dr. Abdullah's son, Azlan, qualified with an M.B.B.S. from the University of Malaya in 1975. Dr. Sulaiman's son is in his final year as a medical student at the University of Karachi, Pakistan.

Haji Mokhtar bin Mohyidin, a telecommunications engineer who, during my second term as Menteri Besar, Negri Sembilan, headed the Telecommunications Department in Negri Sembilan, also has a son, Dr. Haniff, who obtained his degree at the University of Malaya in 1972. Haji Mokhtar's nephew, Dr. Alias bin Dahalan, qualified in 1977. Haji Mokhtar is also closely related to me on my father's side.

Moreover, Linggi will in the near future produce its first woman doctor in the person of Zabedah, a daughter of my cousin Fakruddin: she is at present a third-year medical student at the University of Malaya. The district has already produced its first dental surgeon in the person of Dr. Husnah binti Haji Abass, another cousin of mine. She obtained her degree at the University of Malaya in 1976.

One of the greatest living geneticists, Amram Scheinfeld, fully agrees with Professor E. Adamson Hoebel on the importance of the stock from which one is descended, as is evident from the following quotation from his book:*

> This leads to another point: where wayward genes are minimal and a family is of unusually good stock, cousin marriages or other inbreeding may actually result in superior offspring. The physically superb Spartans were highly inbred; there are many cousin marriages among the Puritans; and the Hutterites, an American farm-

* This book was first published in America, as Amram Scheinfeld is an American geneticist, who did most of his research in genetics in the U.S.A. This quotation appears on pp. 685 and 686 of his book entitled *Your Heredity and Environment*, published in London by Chatto and Windus in 1973.

ing sect, distributed through the Mid-West and Central Canada, which abounds in cousin marriages, has the highest of all birth rates of any group (averaging ten children to every couple) and extremely low death rates.

To take some notable individual families, Charles Darwin married to his first cousin, Emma Wedgeward, produced many distinguished descendants. And in the great Rothschild family almost half of the marriages of descendants of the family's founder, Mayer, in the first five generations have been between first cousins.

I have written at some length on the subject of the genetics of the descendants of Tok Awaludin and Tok Serilah, not because I am a boastful man who is excessively proud of his birthplace, but in order to state a fact that is generally acknowledged throughout the state of Negri Sembilan.

Furthermore, in doing so I am actuated by my conviction that the generally held view that generations of inbreeding inevitably leads to physical and mental deterioration is belied by the findings of Professor Hoebel as well as by the facts related to inbreeding in my own birthplace.

I will indeed go the whole hog and state unequivocally that if random samples of all the other *luak* in Negri Sembilan were to be subjected to a thorough investigation, it would be found that none of them has produced as many doctors and university graduates as the one thousand descendants of Tok Awaludin and Tok Serilah.

Now, it is well known that in all these *luak*, with the exception of the *luak* of Sungai Ujong, the matriarchal *Adat Perpateh* is the predominant customary law among the Minangkabau people. One of the most important provisions of this law prohibits the marriage of a man to a woman of the same *suku* or tribe.

This customary law is so rigidly enforced that if a man were to marry a woman of his own tribe, such a marriage would be stigmatised as incestuous and the guilty couple ruthlessly punished by exiling them to a place where the writ of *Adat Perpateh* does not prevail to mar a love match between a man and a woman of the same tribe.

Inbreeding therefore cannot possibly occur among the Malay (Minangkabau) populations of the *luak* of Negri Sembilan, with the exception of half the *luak* of Sungai Ujong, which forms the administrative district of Port Dickson. In Linggi, the Malay population is of Bugis origin. The Malay population of the rest of

the district of Port Dickson comprises Bugis, Javanese and Malaccan immigrants. They speak the Johore-Riau Malay, unlike the people of Minangkabau origin in the rest of Negri Sembilan whose language resembles Minangkabau speech.

To reinforce my argument in support of Professor Hoebel's view, I may as well mention that among the aforesaid cranks, crackpots, buffoons, recluses, skinflints and eccentrics of Linggi, quite a few had high I.Qs.

A well-known instance was a boy buffoon, called Mat Kijang. In the Government Standard Five Examination of 1913, he topped the list of passers in the whole state of Negri Sembilan, thereby winning a First Class Certificate and an expensive Roskolf pocket watch as a prize.

The state government decided to send him to the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar, for his secondary education and Mat Kijang was very eager to go to this prestigious school. But his uncle and guardian, Ali Pitan, was a religious fanatic who contemptuously told his dejected nephew that to learn the language of the infidel English was *haram*, or sinful, and forbade him to accept the government offer.

In later life, Mat Kijang became a rubber tapper and more and more of a village buffoon with the passing years. No doubt he must have harboured in his heart of hearts a sense of bitter disappointment as more and more Linggi boys were sent for their secondary education to the Malay College, to St. Paul's Institution, and later to the King George V School, Seremban.

Of morons, there is certainly not a plethora of them in Linggi. I can recall only one, called Hassan Ogok-Ogok, the latter double-barrelled epithet having been appended to his name to suggest the stentorian manner in which he laughed inanely.

Another man, Yakkob, nicknamed Ameng (Ah Meng) because he had slit-like eyes, had perhaps an I.Q. slightly above 70 and therefore was not quite a moron. He was merely dull-witted or educationally sub-normal because in five years of schooling he never progressed beyond Standard Two.

He was the son of Mak Esah, the gentle and soft-spoken *dukun* whose medicinal herbs, salves, potions and *jampi* were the mainstay of the sick and ailing in the Linggi of my boyhood. She was the wife of Pak Mamat, the short, dark and dour breeder of buffaloes, and by him had three other children.

Their eldest son, Ishak, was a graduate of the Malacca

Teachers Training College. He taught school at Rembau and generally returned to Linggi on the weekends. He was jocularly known as Sahak Celong because in pronouncing the word *calong* he affected what he supposed was the English pronunciation. For instance, whenever he had occasion to buy some kerosene oil from the village shop, he invariably said to the Chinese shopkeeper, "*Kasi minyak gas satu celong*".

The two other children of Pat Mamat and Mak Esah were Yusof and Ismail. Yusof, with the incomprehensible epithet Cibi appended to his name, was very fond of fishing for *ikan baung*, and one day while doing so on the left bank of the Linggi River, a large crocodile lashed out at him with its powerful tail so that he fell into the river. The crocodile proceeded to drown him by dragging him into the depths of the river. No doubt it next proceeded to eat a portion of Yusof's dead body.

The crocodile was caught two days later by a *pawang*, who was an expert in catching crocodiles. He used a method known as *mengahir* which consists of attaching a white cock to a large hook and mumbling the appropriate *jampi* over the bait.

After it had been killed and disembowelled, Yusof's left forearm and hand with the ring he had worn was discovered almost intact in the crocodile's stomach.

The rest of his body was never found. No doubt the crocodile had secreted it somewhere and in subsequent days it was eaten piecemeal by other members of the crocodile tribe and sundry riverine predators.

Ismail, the youngest son of Mak Esah Dukun and Pak Mamat, was a good friend of mine who, after his father's death, took over the full-time job of tending some twenty buffaloes, corralling them every evening and lighting a fire in the *kandang*, the smoke of which drove away the obnoxious blood-sucking flies known as *pikat*, whose special diet seems to be the blood of buffaloes.

As for epilepsy, I remember three Linggi men who suffered from this disease. The first was Shuib, nicknamed Pak Kentol, who was so severely afflicted with it that, after years of all too frequent seizures, his mind became so seriously disordered that he used to chase people all over the *kampung* after an attack, brandishing a *parang* in his hand.

Epilepsy can of course be treated and to a great extent controlled by using phenobarbitone and other anti-convulsant

drugs. But at that time the *kampung* people had little faith in Western medicine and Shuib's condition grew worse year by year, so that in the end his legs had to be shackled to prevent him from killing someone with his *parang* after one of his epileptic fits. The suffering he must have borne in having fits while his legs were shackled must have been unendurable, and a mercy it was when he finally died.

The second Linggi epileptic was Arshad bin Haji Jalal, an adolescent boy who had a fit while bathing and fell into a shallow well, drowning himself.

The third Linggi man to suffer from epilepsy was Mat Pendekar. His first epileptic fit occurred in middle age and it is very probable that an organic disease of the brain, such as a cerebral tumour, was not only the cause of his frequent convulsive attacks, but also the cause of his subsequent death not many months after the first epileptic fit.

Having disposed of the subject of genetics as it affects the markedly inbred descendants of Tok Awaludin and his elder sister, Tok Serilah, the *nenek moyang* of the Linggi people, I must not forget to point out that the transmission of recessive and dominant genes to the offspring of married couples in Linggi or elsewhere does not wholly account for the backwardness or otherwise of a particular community.

Environmental factors also have important effects on the vitality and intelligence of a particular person, community, race or nation.

In the case of the Malays, there can be no doubt that adverse environmental factors have been and are some of the most important contributory factors to their apparent backwardness when compared with the other races in this multiracial country.

In America, for instance, it has been found that the I.Q.s of random samples of the Negro population are significantly lower than similar samples of the white population. However, contrary to this finding of low I.Q.s among the very poor Negroes, the I.Q.s of the small number of rich Negroes are comparable to those of their white counterparts.*

My first clear recollection of myself as a child is of my sitting stark naked at the door of the *tengah rumah* facing toward the *pelantar* and the kitchen beyond.

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* A. Scheinfeld's, *Your Heredity and Environment*, p. 379

I was then a couple of years old and was sucking milk from a lemonade bottle which conveyed its contents by means of a long red rubber tube to the sucker in my mouth — an unhygienic mode of infant feeding in popular use in the year of grace 1907 and many years after as well.

I haven't the slightest idea what I looked like then, but my late mother used to tell me that, as a child, my body was practically never free from *kudis* and that my hair was very curly. For the later reason I was nicknamed *Keteng*, a shortened form of the word *kereteng*, which means curly.

As I grew older, Malay custom dictated that my curly poll should be clean-shaven almost every month, leaving a rectangular tuft of hair over the frontal region of my head. This tuft of hair was allowed to grow moderately long and was known as *jambul*. Every small boy in those days had to wear this tonsorial ornament until he attained the age of 5 or 6, when it was lopped off completely.

As the cut-throat razor with which my mother shaved my head was not particularly sharp, I dreaded this ritual shaving. It was invariably followed by the scrubbing of any *daki* that had accumulated behind my ears, on my neck or any other part of my body during the previous month.

It was said of me as a child that I was the splitting image of my father. For that reason ancient Malay custom or superstition dictated that my left ear lobe should be bored. It wasn't a part of the custom, however, that I should have to wear an ear ring. Indeed, it was believed that it was only necessary to bore my ear lobe in order to avert the early death of my father. Incidentally, although this bore in my left ear should have healed completely and indeed is normally palpable as a small lump, once in a blue moon it festers mildly, emitting a rather smelly sebaceous exudate.

Alas, the belief that my father would live to a ripe old age as a result of my ear lobe having been bored was belied by the fact that he unexpectedly died of dysentery at the age of thirty in the year 1912.

Had he been admitted to hospital, it is probable that he could have been cured if a microscopic examination of his stool had shown that he was suffering from amoebic dysentery. This form of dysentery is curable by ten daily injections of emetine hydrochloride followed by a course of emetine bismuth iodide by mouth.

If, however, he had been suffering from the bacillary form of dysentery, it was likely that he would have died of it, for neither the sulphonamide drugs nor ampicillin and the broad-spectrum antibiotics which nowadays are prescribed for the treatment and cure of bacillary dysentery had not even been dreamed of by doctors, let alone discovered.

In those days, however, much greater faith was placed by Malays in the curative properties of herbs prescribed by *dukuns* and *bomohs*, and in the *jampi* inaudibly muttered by them over the herbs and the patients themselves, than in the drugs prescribed by qualified doctors.

My recollection of my father is not very clear. He was working as a forest guard at the township of Pasir Panjang, about ten miles from Linggi on the road to Port Dickson. He used to spend the weekends at home so that it was only on Saturday afternoons and Sundays that I came into contact with him.

He was then called Mat Warak (i.e. Mat the Pious). I was told later that he became the disciple of Tuan Haji Said bin Haji Jamaludin. Haji Jamaludin was generally known as Tuan Din for his piety and deep knowledge of the Arabic language, Muslim theology and jurisprudence.

His son, Tuan Haji Said, followed in his footsteps and after many years of religious education in Mecca returned to Linggi. He had made a deep study of *tassauf* or sufiism and in Linggi he began to teach his pupils the particular form of sufiism known as *Tarekat Ahmadiyah*, and later to propagate it elsewhere in Negri Sembilan.

In his lifetime he was revered as a saintly religious teacher of *Tarekat*. After his death at the age of fifty-five, his tomb on Ampang Hill was regarded as a shrine by the Malays of Negri Sembilan, many of whom even now go on pilgrimage to it and pray for his intercession with Allah to forgive them for their past sins or as an act of thanksgiving to Allah for any serious illness of a beloved child, who has been cured of it, or the success of a son or daughter in an examination.

In his younger days, my father was jokingly known as Mat Lawa (i.e. Mat the Handsome or the Well-dressed). During that period he worked as a house-boy to a European planter somewhere in Negri Sembilan. It was said of him that he was so honest that his *tuan* trusted him with the daily marketing and shopping chores and that he kept the *tuan's* bungalow, furniture

and crockery so spotlessly clean that he was much liked by the *tuan*. It was this *tuan* who recommended him for the post of a forest guard when he was about to be transferred on promotion as manager of a bigger estate in another state.

It was told of my father during that period of his life that he was exceptionally proficient in the art of *silat* and that in a fight with a Javanese strongman, he was able to overthrow his enemy, who was apparently not so adept in the Javanese form of the art.

I remember that whenever he returned home for the weekend, he used to call me to his prayer mat after every *Maghrib* prayer and teach me the Arabic alphabet. After I had more or less learnt to recognise every letter of the alphabet, he proceeded to teach me the *jus amma*, comprising the short *surah* of the Koran.

As I was not an infant prodigy, this weekly experience of being more or less coerced to learn the *jus amma* at the age of three-and-a-half or so could not be described as "Arabic Without Tears". Consequently I conceived for it as intense a dislike as a child of that age is capable of feeling. My father thereby unwittingly succeeded in instilling into me a feeling of fear and dread every time he returned home for the weekend. And far from mastering the *jus amma* I could only manage to read very imperfectly a few of the shorter *surah*.

The austere religious exercises which a dedicated devotee of the *Tarekat* must undergo are not for the weak-minded or the faint-hearted. Later, as a small boy of ten, I saw the group practice of *ratib* led by Tuan Haji Said himself in the Linggi mosque.

At the conclusion of the *ratib*, the participants, advanced students and novitiates alike, stood with linked hands in a circle as they chanted the formula *"la-ila-ha-il-lallah"* in unison. As they swayed from side to side and as the tempo of the side-to-side movement increased and the formula chanted grew louder and louder, a novitiate shouted the word "Allah" and fell to the floor in the middle of the circle in a dead faint.

The rest of the participants continued to perform the *ratib*, seemingly oblivious to what had happened. The ones to the right and left of the unconscious novitiate at once linked hands and the tempo and loudness of the chanting increased more and more until Tuan Haji Said signalled the end of the rigorous *ratib* by clapping his hands.

It took some time for the fallen novitiate to recover full con-

sciousness, at which time Tuan Haji Said immediately advised him to discontinue from being a member of the *Tarekat* fraternity.

I was told later that another novitiate, Abdul Jalal, nicknamed Bagak, became so affected by the *ratib* that he detached himself from the circle of chanters and jumped into the well by the side of the mosque. He would have drowned, in his dazed state, had not some chance bystanders, who were performing their pre-prayer ablutions at the well, rescued him. He became rather crazy for the rest of his life; the nickname Bagak bestowed upon him after the incident means "lacking in the head".

It could not be said of my father that he had attained the state of ecstasy and self-absorption in God which is characteristic of a full-fledged *sufi*. But by all the accounts that my mother and other close relatives gave me years later, there is no doubt that he had, by his assiduous performance of the various exercises that a student of *Tarekat* is enjoined to practise, progressed far beyond the novitiate stage and, in the process of doing so, become extremely religious.

It is therefore not to be wondered at that he conceived it to be his sacred duty to make me learn the *jus amma* at so early an age. His well-intentioned idea of making me a religious infant prodigy was in reality actuated by his great love for me, as was explained to me later by my mother.

My failure to master all the *surah* comprising the *jus amma* was a source of disappointment to him, as was evidenced by his repeated attempts to correct my mispronounciation of certain Arabic words. These attempts, however, only served to aggravate my bitter feeling of fear and frustration for having failed to please him.

Furthermore, during the daytime on Saturday afternoons and on Sundays, my father worked hard on a three-acre piece of land which he had inherited from his father. The work involved the felling of the trees in the *belukar* covering the land, the clearing of its undergrowth and preparing it in general for the planting of rubber. Rubber planting was at that time already becoming the alternative form of agriculture among the people of Linggi, especially as their *sawah* had become water-logged on account of the silting-up of a tributary of the Linggi River, which bisected the *sawah*.

The silting of this stream and the Linggi River itself had been

brought about by the extensive mining operations around the upper reaches of the Linggi River, which started during the second half of the nineteenth century and continued up to the late twenties of the present century.

Another factor that contributed to the change in the pattern of agriculture in Linggi and elsewhere in Negri Sembilan was the price of rubber, which then stood at more than two dollars per pound. The purchasing power of the Malayan dollar was then so high that a dollar was sufficient to buy four *gantangs* of rice. The prices of other consumer goods were correspondingly low. Ten dollars was more than sufficient to cover all the monthly expenses of an average *kampung* Malay. The lure of rubber planting had indeed become irresistible to the rural population of all districts in Negri Sembilan.

The fact that my father had to work so hard on Saturday afternoons and Sundays further reduced the number of hours he could devote to me, demonstrate his love for me and win mine for him.

Thus it was that I came to look upon him as a sort of "Stranger in the House", whose spare time was devoted to the task of making me learn the *jus amma*. As is quite natural in a child of three to four years of age placed in such circumstances, my love was then centred upon my mother. For my father the love that I should have felt was replaced by a feeling of fear and dread. The doggerel:

> I do not love thee, Dr. Fell,
> The reason why I cannot tell

accurately describes the sort of relationship that prevailed between me and my father at that early stage of my life.

Thus my lack of love for my father was due to circumstances beyond the control of everyone concerned in the close-knit family circle, and had nothing to do with the Oedipus complex as propounded by Sigmund Freud.

As I now reflect upon my past at the age of three or four, I understand fully the feeling of utter mortification that I felt when, on a Sunday evening, my father decided to take me along with him to Pasir Panjang on his bicycle. I clung to my mother and shed bitter tears. She tried her best to coax and soothe me by saying that at the end of the coming week my father would bring me back to Linggi and return me to her loving arms safe

and sound.

During the journey to Pasir Panjang I cried and sobbed inconsolably, despite my father's attempts to cheer me up. On arrival at my father's government quarters at Pasir Panjang, I was so emotionally drained that I at once fell asleep without eating the food that my father had cooked for dinner. My father did not try to wake me up, perhaps realising that the grief caused by the sudden wrench from my mother had left me bereft of all appetite.

I woke up at 8.00 a.m. the following morning and as soon as I became aware of my new surroundings, I began to cry again. My father hurriedly bathed and dressed me, then carried me to a nearby coffeeshop and ordered a cup of milk and two slices of toasted bread with *serikaya* for me, he himself eating his own breakfast of two half-boiled eggs and coffee, bread and butter.

Having eaten nothing the night before, I naturally felt very hungry and having dried my tears, ravenously drank the milk and ate the bread and *serikaya*. My father was pleased to see me in much better spirits than the day before, and having paid the coffeeshop-keeper, took me to the house of his cousin, Cik Aminah, the daughter of Penghulu Ujang of Pasir Panjang.

My father's cousin had two sons, Salleh and Adam. Salleh was a stocky boy of about eleven and Adam was much younger, being only about three years old. The former was a cheerful soul, forever laughing or grinning. He took me and Adam for a walk along the road to Port Dickson. We stopped at a small bridge spanning a shallow stream. The water in the stream was crystal-clear, and leaning over the hand rail on the right side of the bridge, Salleh saw a python about fifteen feet long and the size of a medium-sized bamboo stem.

Salleh took me in his arms and leaning over the rail, he pointed out the python to me. As it was the first snake I had ever seen in my life, I was terribly frightened at the sight of such a big one, but Salleh assured me that it was not a dangerous snake and that it confined its attention to chickens, rats, and baby goats, which it generally swallowed whole.

It was at Pasir Panjang that I had my first sight of the sea, for one evening my father took me to the seashore and having put on a pair of short pants and divested himself of his *baju* and sarong he proceeded to wade into the sea, carrying me with him on his shoulder until he was neck-deep in the sea at high tide. I

was naturally very frightened, especially as the waves alternately advanced toward the shore and rolled back again. My father lifted me up from his shoulder to prevent the waves from washing over me.

The daily company of Salleh and Adam consoled me somewhat for the rest of the week, and on the following Saturday afternoon my father took me back to Linggi on his bicycle. You may imagine my inexpressible delight on seeing my mother again and her equally great delight in welcoming her son back safe and sound to the ancestral home.

I have forgotten to mention that when I was about two years old, my mother bore her first daughter, Maimunah. As I do not have the slightest recollection of this sister of mine, she must have died in early infancy.

In 1911, my parents' second daughter, Siti Nur, was born. She was their only daughter to survive. She died in 1971 at the comparatively old age of sixty-one.

Two years later my second brother Kassim was born. My parents took great pity on the childless state of my father's youngest sister, Halimah, and her husband, Mushaffak, and agreed to give Kassim to them for adoption. My aunt Halimah, her husband and Kassim lived with my paternal grandmother, Che 'Empok. I remember her very well as a white-haired old woman of nearly seventy. As is the way with all grandparents, she loved me very much and quite often cajoled me to stay with her for a day or two, giving me one cent as inducement for a night's stay at her house.

In those days the value of money was many times more than it is now and with the one cent that my grandmother gave me I could gorge myself on any amount of peanuts, of which I was very fond.

My father's elder sister, Khadijah, nicknamed Halus, whom I generally referred to as Mak Alus and directly addressed as Mak (mother), had married Syed Mohammad, the younger brother of Sharifah Rogayah, a cousin of my mother's. She had two children by him, the elder of the two a beautiful girl, Sharifah Hijau, and the younger a son, Syed Ahmad. Sharifah Hijau was five years older than I, and Syed Ahmad was three years my senior. My paternal aunt and her two children were also very fond of me and I visited them quite often and sometimes slept at their house, sited about twenty yards from my paternal grandmother's.

My parents' third daughter, Safiah, was born two years after Kassim. I remember very well my mother bathing her every morning when she was about four months old. She was a very thin and emaciated infant. I also remember my mother feeding her every morning with a mixture of rice pap and sugar. This form of infant food was generally fed to the child a few days after birth in addition to Nestle's Milkmaid condensed milk.

The rice pap was generally cooked in a muslin *pundi-pundi* (muslin pouch). As soon as the rice had reached the desired softness it was taken out of the pouch and put into a saucer. Sugar was then thoroughly mashed into the rice pap with a coconut-shell ladle and the resulting mixture fed to the infant.

With the hindsight of a doctor with a special interest in pediatrics, I now know why my infant sister was so emaciated. She was suffering from dietetic diarrhoea due to an excess of sugar and carbohydrate in her diet. It was also quite probable that an infective element due to such germs as *Escherichia Coli* or a virus was grafted on what was at the beginning simple dietetic diarrhoea due to excessive intake of sugar and rice.

She soon became thinner and thinner and died of the disease. I suspect that all of us were similarly fed and that my elder brother, Razak, and younger sister, Maimunah, most probably succumbed to similar attacks of this diarrhoea, with which vomiting is so frequently associated that it is generally classified as "Diarrhoea and Vomiting" or shortly D. & V., by doctors.

How my sister Siti Nur, my brother Kassim and I survived this combined insult and injury to the alimentary tract, God alone knows.

The rice-pap-and-sugar was fed to the infant in addition to bottle feeding, generally with condensed milk which in itself is an unsuitable form of milk for infant feeding on account of its high content of sugar. It is not to be wondered at therefore that so many infants died of D. & V.

Whether a child was breast-fed or bottle-fed, its diet was invariably supplemented with the inevitable rice-pap-and-sugar so that a breast-fed infant, too, was liable to suffer from diarrhoea and vomiting. Breast-milk being the ideal from of food for newborn infants, the diarrhoea and vomiting of breast-fed infants is generally less severe than that of bottle-fed ones, unless an ineffective element is superimposed upon it.

My mother had an elder sister. Khadijah, two years older

than she was. She was the first child born by my maternal grandmother, Siti Zaleha. Before my mother's marriage, my aunt had been married to her cousin, Abdul Majid bin Kapitan Ali. Kapitan Ali was the youngest brother of my grandfather, Dato' Muda Haji Mohd. Peral. I was told later that before my mother's marriage, they occupied the room in the kitchen part of the house. For that reason when I grew up, I generally referred to her as Mak Po, meaning a mother who lives at the *dapor* or kitchen, and directly addressed her as Mak and her husband as Bah. Thus there were three persons whom I called Mak: my own mother, my mother's elder sister, Khadijah, and my father's elder sister who was also named Khadijah, although people generally called her Alus or Halus.

After the birth of my mother, my grandmother bore three more children, two sons, Mohamed and Ibrahim, and another daughter, her fifth and last child, Rashidah. As a child I saw little of my two uncles as they had been appointed as pupil teachers elsewhere in Negri Sembilan and later were admitted to the Teachers Training College at Malacca.

My maternal grandmother, Siti Zaleha, was actually the third wife of my grandfather, Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Peral, and he must have married her while he was in his late fifties or early sixties while she was still in her teens. This I deduce from the fact that his eldest son, Haji Ahmad, by his first wife, was older than my maternal grandmother, and Haji Ahmad's eldest son, Haji Mustafa, was older than my mother's eldest sister, Khadijah.

He married my grandmother after the death of both his first and second wives. By his first wife, Aminah, he had seven children, four daughters and three sons. Of the four daughters, I only remember one, called Amimah, whom all of us nephews and nieces addressed as Inche.* The three other daughters had already died by the time I was born.

The seven children of Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Peral by his first wife were therefore my mother's half-brothers and half-sisters, and they were my half-uncles and aunts and their children my half-cousins.

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* The word "Inche" is sometimes addressed by Linggi children to either their mothers' or fathers' sisters.

For his first wife, he had built the biggest house in Linggi, a twenty-four-pillared one, roofed with *atap genting* and having a brick *kolah* (water tank) as an appendage of the *serambi* part of the house. Under the *anjong* of the *serambi* there was a medium-sized cannon mounted on a wheeled gun-carriage made of hard wood.

There were some twenty cannon balls scattered on the ground round the cannon. The biggest cannon of all bought by my grandfather was a ten-foot one, lying rusty and neglected in the compound of the house.

The eldest son of Haji Mohamad Peral by his first wife was Haji Ahmad. Both he and his young son, Haji Mustafa, were taken by my grandfather on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Haji Mustafa was left there to pursue his religious studies. Eighteen years later he returned to Linggi to be one of the trio of *orang alim* who made Linggi famous throughout Negri Sembilan as a centre for religious education in the early years of the present century.*

On this particular pilgrimage to Mecca, my grandfather also took his two sons by his first wife, Haji Sulaiman and Haji Abdullah, and two grandsons, Haji Hassan and Haji Mohamad. As my mother, who was then ten years old, was his favourite daughter, she was the only one of his daughters who accompanied him to the Holy Land. As she was also the only member of the female sex amongst so many older men and boys in this family group of pilgrims, she was dressed up as a boy and in that guise frolicked freely on the boat.

I was told that the rest of his children and close relatives accompanied them from Pengkalan Kempas to Singapore in a Straits Steamship coastal steamer which he had chartered to enable them to bid him and his flock of children and grandchildren goodbye and God speed as they embarked on the pilgrim ship.

When the ship arrived at Bombay, news of an epidemic of some sort at Mecca caused the British authorities there to enforce a quarantine on the ship and its pilgrims so that for forty

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* The second member of this trio was the teacher of sufiism, Tuan Haji Said bin Haji Jamaludin. Haji Jamaludin was generally known as Tuan Din for his piety and deep knowledge of the Arabic language, Muslim theology and jurisprudence. The third member was Lebai or Cikgu Abass, who did not go to Mecca to study there but had been a brilliant pupil of Haji Jamaludin.

days my grandfather, his children, and grandchildren were stranded in this port-city. As my grandfather was not short of funds, they enjoyed their enforced stay in the second biggest city in India. My mother used to regale us with interesting accounts of the sights and sounds of this great city.

After the death of his first wife, my grandfather married his second one, who bore him a son, Abdul Talib (later Haji), who was said to be the very image of Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Peral. She died giving birth to Abdul Talib as a result of the complications of a difficult labour.

Haji Talib had three children by his first wife: Hashim, Kak Jak and Ainah. After the death of his first wife, he remarried a Rembau woman and by her had a son, Jaafar, now one of the most successful Malay businessmen in Seremban, being the proud owner of Sungai Ujong Store, Birch Road, Seremban, opposite the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus.

Thus it is that I can boast of many uncles, and half-uncles, aunts and half-aunts, and numerous cousins and half-cousins, whose innumerable children call me Pak Ngah Said (Uncle Said) and whose still more numerous grandchildren call me Tok Ngah Said (Granduncle Said). Similarly, I have numberless second and third cousins.

Of the four daughters of my grandfather, Dato' Muda Mohamad Peral, by his first wife, the eldest, Amimah, had an only son, Haji Hassan. The second daughter had four children: two daughters, Aminah and Ambak; and two sons, Abdul Malek and Alias. The third daughter had one son, Haji Mohamed. The fourth died without leaving any issue. Three of them had already died before I was born, and were buried in the same burial plot as their father in the Linggi mosque compound.

The surviving eldest daughter, Amimah, inherited the big house at Pengkalan Kundang and I remember her quite well in her old age. She died when I was twelve years old.

Each of Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Peral's two other sons, Haji Sulaiman and Haji Abdullah, had several children. The former had a daughter, Hendon, by his first wife, a Linggi relative. After her death he remarried, his second wife being a girl from the village of Alai in Malacca. By her he had four sons, Mohamed Salleh (now Capt. Haji Mohamed Salleh, Datuk Panglima Lumut of Selangor), Abdul Hamid, Abdul Malek and Abass.

The youngest son, Haji Abdullah, had eight children, four sons and four daughters. The eldest was a daughter, Long Shamah, followed by Ahmad (nicknamed Lobak), Atkah, Mohamed, Mansurah, Asiah, Abdul Rahman and Mokhtar.

Of these eight children, the eldest son, Ahmad Lobak was adopted by my aunt and his half-sister, Khadijah, and her husband, Dato' Laksamana Abdul Majid, as their marriage had turned out to be barren.

Of my two half-uncles, Haji Sulaiman and A. Haji Abdullah, I retain only a faint recollection of the former as he was working in Seremban as a demarcator in the Survey Department and seldom returned to Linggi. However, I retain a vivid memory of his mortal remains lying in state in the big house at Pengkalan Kundang, surrounded by his grieving wife, children and a host of close relatives.

Of Haji Abdullah, the youngest son of my grandfather by his first wife, I retain the liveliest recollection. He had survived his elder brother, Haji Sulaiman, by many years and died in 1934, two years after I had qualified as a doctor, at the time when I was twenty-five and in charge of the District Hospital, Pekan, Pahang.

After the death of his father, he had received his share of the considerable fortune left by Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Peral. So he had gone on a spending spree to Singapore by one of the small coastal steamships plying between the river port of Pengkalan Kempas and Singapore.

In Singapore he had met Cik Zainab, the widowed daughter of an Indian Muslim. Her first husband had died a few months before, after she had borne him a daughter, Fatimah.

Her father, Ghaffur, was a very wealthy Indian Muslim who had married a Singapore Malay woman. I was to find out many years later the extent of his wealth when I was a medical student in Singapore. I then visited Dunlop Street where Cik Zainab's younger brother, Abdul Rahman, was living in the annex to the Masjid Ghaffur which his father had built.

He told me that the whole of some fifty shop-houses on both sides of Dunlop Street had once belonged to his late father, but when it came to the question of the division of the property among his children, they had been diddled by a succession of lawyers so that none of them had retained possession of any of the fifty shop-houses.

Abdul Rahman himself had been reduced to a state of poverty and had to earn his living by becoming a stall-keeper selling rice and curry to indigent labourers. His brother, Bak Hassan, was employed as a *tambi* (errand boy) at the department store of Robinson & Co. in Raffles Place, Singapore.

It was at this critical juncture in the family fortunes that my uncle, Haji Abdullah, came to the rescue and married Cik Zainab and took her to Linggi together with her daughter, Fatimah. Fatimah was later married to Osman, nephew of Penghulu Ahmad, alias Cikgu Nong and therefore a second cousin of mine.

Haji Abdullah was my mother's favourite half-brother and she never failed to visit him every year usually during the four days following the *Hari Raya Idilfitri*, bringing him all manner of *Hari Raya* cakes and sweetmeats that she had especially reserved for him and his family. She always took me along with her during these visits.

I remember vividly that, after my visit to Pasir Panjang with my father, my mother and I were whisked away in a *dokat* (i.e. dog-cart) drawn by a young bull and driven by my uncle, Haji Abdullah, to the neighbouring village of Kundor, about five miles away from Linggi via the *kampung* of Pengkalan Durian. He was then the headmaster of the newly built Malay school there.

He was a tall, well-built and withal a hail-fellow-well-met kind of man. He wore a thick toothbrush-moustache, but was otherwise clean-shaven. He walked with a distinct limp as a result of an injury to his right foot sustained during his younger days. The injury caused him to step on the ground with the fore part of the sole of his right foot and his right heel to be uplifted from the ground.

We were welcomed with open arms, by Uchu Zainab and her children, Long Shamah, Atkah, Mohamad and Mansurah.

Mohamad and I, who were roughly the same age, were taken by Long Shamah and Atkah to a limpid stream at the back of the school, and with Long Shamah carrying me in her arms and Atkah carrying Mohamad, we splashed about in the clear but shallow water of the stream. I remember the screams of sheer delight with which Mohamad and I shattered the stillness of the Kundor countryside.

Of the daughters of my uncle, Haji Abdullah, Long Shamah, the eldest, was undoubtedly the most beautiful, but Mansurah, a

year younger than me, bade fair to be as beautiful as she grew older. As was quite customary in those days, I was plighted in troth to her with the mutual consent of my mother and uncle. The moment it became generally known in the family circle that Mansurah was my *tunang* (betrothed) I was subjected to endless teasing by my uncles, aunts and cousins.

I was naturally annoyed by these teasings, as at that age I hadn't the remotest idea of marrying anybody, least of all Mansurah, whom I regarded as a sister.

Alas, I was not destined to marry my pretty little cousin, for at the age of about eight, a small black tumour began to grow on the sole of her right foot. It grew bigger and bigger, broke through the sole of her foot, festered and spread into the surrounding tissues, causing the most excruciating pain to the poor girl, and after about six months of unendurable suffering, she died.

As a doctor, I later knew that the tumour was what is known as *Melanotic Sarcoma*, the most malignant form of cancer which, unlike the form of cancer known as *Carcinoma* which generally attacks people after middle age, is known to affect people of all age groups.

To this day, I can never recall the terrible pain and suffering which this horrible disease inflicted upon my cousin Mansurah without a feeling of great pity and compassion for the poor girl.

After this visit to my uncle and his family at Kundor, the next thing that I remember quite well was being taken by my aunt, Rashidah, and her husband, Mohamad bin Abu, to Seremban, where the latter was employed as a clerk in the Sanitary Board.

The journey to Seremban was an unforgettable one, for we were passengers in the newly-introduced chain-driven Albion bus which chugged along at a speed of about ten to fifteen miles an hour so that the twenty-one mile journey to Seremban took more than an hour.

The laterite road made the journey a very dusty one and it was aggravated by the dreadful smell of the fumes from the exhaust pipe. It is not to be wondered at that many of the passengers became car-sick and vomited all over the place inside the bus.

Nevertheless as the bus reached the top of Rasah Hill, I was entranced by my first sight of Seremban town. I had never before imagined that there existed a town as big as Seremban.

I was taken by my aunt and her husband to a semi-detached wooden house on top of a hillock in Temiang, which in those days was a typical Malay *kampung* with its usual coconut, durian, mangosteen, rambutan, langsat and other fruit trees.

The other house next door was occupied by a Japanese couple, whose names I have forgotten. They were very nice and extremely courteous people, with whom my aunt and her husband got along very well. The husband was employed as a guard with the Malayan Railways, most probably the only Japanese so employed in the good old days.

I enjoyed my first visit to Seremban and soon made friends with a Temiang boy, Adam, who was the same age as myself. There was a pond at the bottom of the low hill on which my aunt's husband Mohamad's and the Japanese railway-guard's semi-detached houses were sited. One day, while playing with Adam near the pond the red rubber ball which we were kicking about fell into the pond, where a couple of geese were swimming merrily.

I waded in the pond to retrieve the ball and as I proceeded further into the pond, it got deeper and deeper. You can imagine the fright and horror which I felt when I found the water had reached the level of my neck.

Fortunately a passerby at once perceived the danger in which my rashness in trying to recover the ball had put me. He at once stripped himself of his *baju*, waded into the pond and rescued me from imminent death by drowning. To an adult like him the pond was not particularly deep, because I remember quite well that when he reached me, the water was merely waist-deep to him.

At the time of my first visit to Seremban, my cousin Fakruddin, the first child born by my aunt Rashidah, was six months old and had just learned to crawl. They were naturally very happy to have been blessed with a son. For my part, I was a great help in looking after my little cousin whenever my aunt was occupied in doing her household chores.

I was taken by my aunt and her husband to the town by rickshaw. The rickshaw pullers of those days were very tall Hokcha Chinese who wore their hair long and plaited into queues which they wound round their heads to prevent them flapping about as they proceeded along at a jog-trot. As my aunt's husband was an officer of the Seremban Sanitary Board, most of the rick-

shaw pullers knew and respected him so that quite often they declined to accept the ten-cent fare to and from town.

At Seremban I first tasted *satay* which was then exclusively hawked by Javanese men, *mee rebus* (boiled vermicelli) sold by Indian hawkers and *mee goreng* (fried vermicelli available at Hylam coffeeshops). All these delicious delicacies made a little gourmand of me and the idea of returning to Linggi never crossed my mind during the fortnight that I stayed with my aunt and her husband at the *kampung* of Temiang in Seremban.

However, my fortnight's stay there was abruptly terminated by the arrival of my aunt Khadijah and her husband, Dato' Laksamana Abdul Majid, who told us that my father was seriously ill and that he wanted to see me immediately.

I was therefore brought back to Linggi together with my aunt Rashidah and her infant son, Fakruddin. We arrived at Linggi in the twilight hours and found the house full of close relatives, and about twenty men were intoning the *surah Yasin* of the Koran. My mother and aunts and all the female relatives were crying and sobbing.

I was brought close to my father's bedside. To my infantile eyes he did not appear to be very ill, and it was inexplicable to me why my mother and the rest of the womenfolk were crying and sobbing.

He put his hand on my head and said something which I do not now recollect but which my mother told me later was an exhortation that I should be a good boy and that I should learn to read the Koran, know the *Rukun Islam* and *Rukun Imam* and that I should faithfully perform my religious duties without shirking any of them.

I was told later that after I had been withdrawn from his bedside, he made one last desperate effort to perform the pre-prayer ablutions and actually prayed the *subuh* or pre-dawn prayer in a supine position in bed.

Thus died a father whom I had not yet learned to love, but who, I was told later by my mother, loved me very much. Later as an orphan I gradually began to understand the disadvantage of not having a father to guide me and to save me from the humiliation which I felt whenever well-meaning people gently rubbed my head in sympathy over my orphaned state.

My father was thirty years old when he died, leaving my mother a widow at twenty-six. After the *eddah* period of three

months and ten days during which a widow or divorcee is forbidden to remarry, a close relative, Long Aim, declared his desire to marry my mother. She rejected his suit on the ground that she wanted to devote herself to the care of her children and her mother.

As I grew older I heard of other marriage proposals made through go-betweens, and each time I invariably shuddered with fear and hatred of the proposer, as I loathed the very idea of sharing my mother's love with a step-father.

I have alluded earlier to the fact that when my grandfather Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Peral died in 1893, he bequeathed to his children a considerable fortune, which he had accumulated over a number of years as a *bona fide* tin miner and trader. Those were the years when the Linggi River was the only highway between Seremban and Linggi and my grandfather owned a tin mine in Seremban somewhere near the present railway station. In fact, he was not the only Linggi man who owned tin mines in Seremban, then generally called Semujong by the Linggi people. Haji Hussain bin Zainuddin, my mother's first cousin, who died two years ago at the advanced age of ninety-eight, used to tell me that three other rich men of Linggi owned tin mines in Semujong. One of them was Mohamad Zain bin Omar, known in Linggi as Pak Itam Mek. I have forgotten the names of the other two.

For the purpose of carrying both the tin which my grandfather obtained from his own mine and that which he bought from petty tin traders, he had a fleet of fairly large boats which were poled downstream to Permatang Pasir, about one and half miles from Linggi. The tin ingots and ore were unloaded at his godown there.

Those boats were then loaded with bags of rice, opium, salt, bales of *kain belacu* (unbleached cotton cloth) and other textiles and poled upstream to Pajak Kijai at Rasah, where he had another godown in which to store these imported goods. These were afterwards sold to Chinese shopkeepers at Rasah, which was then the capital of the State of Sungai Ujong, as the present town of Seremban hadn't yet been built.

As a boy I remember that some of the tin ingots brought down to Linggi were used in the ancestral home as *pengimpit tepi tikar* or weights, to prevent the edges of *mengkuang* mats from curling up.

I have in my possession a few of the account books of my grandfather;* the rest were carelessly torn up and burned by my grandmother. In any case, the few that I retain indicate that the total value of the tin ingots and ore which he brought down to Permatang Pasir and the goods that he imported into Sungai Ujong amounted to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

In fact he and his youngest brother Ali Redza, upon whom his Chinese trading associates in Malacca had unofficially conferred the title of "Kapitan Ali", became two of the richest men in what was then called Sungai Ujong.

His mining and trading activities were all done before he was elected Dato' Muda Linggi, thereby succeeding his father, Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Salleh.

With his riches he was able to buy several cannons and many muskets and blunderbusses with which to defend Linggi against the frequent attacks by Rembau in the struggle to control the tin trade of Sungai Ujong.†

Unfortunately the bulk of his property was appropriated by my mother's half-brothers and half-sisters, the children of his first wife. I remember as a small boy hearing my aunt Khadijah bewailing the fact that my grandmother and her children did not inherit even *sejangut udang* i.e. "a lobster's antenna" of the property left by my grandfather.

The expression *sejangut udang* means "not a scrap or a mite", and I believe that my aunt was indulging in a natural feeling of bitter disappointment against her half-brothers and half-sisters for having appropriated all the money and the gold left by my grandfather.

I must confess that my father's death did not make me feel any feeling of grief or sense of irreplaceable loss. He had overtly done very little to win my love and affection and his weekend practice of practically coercing me to read the *jus amma* and for-

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* These accounts give an illuminating view of Malay participation in tin mining and other trading ventures before the advent of British Protection. Recorded in *Jawi*, the books form part of the private collection of the author.

† Only two of the these cannons are at present to be seen in Linggi, mounted on cement bases in front of the Linggi mosque. The rest were sold by Haji Abdullah to iron foundries in Seremban to be converted into *parangs*, axes, scythes, etc. The muskets were dumped into a *buyau* in the *sawah* when the Japanese army approached Negri Sembilan.

cibly taking me to Pasir Panjang on his bicycle were not calculated to endear him to me.

Except for the fact that I felt very sad when thoughtless but well-meaning people called me an orphan, I was otherwise a happy child, especially as after my father's death, my aunt Khadijah and her husband Dato' Laksamana Abdul Majid lavished their love and affection upon me, so that I called her Mak and her husband Bah.

My mother must have loved my father very much, and this great love for her late husband explained why she never remarried despite several proposals, two or three of which came from men of good character and of means sufficient to maintain her and her three children in some comfort.

I was told later by my mother that when his dysentery took a turn for the worse and he had a premonition that he would die of it, my father had a serious talk with her and adjured her to bring me up very strictly, particularly in regard to my religious education.

Chapter Two

The Koran Reader and the Primary Schoolboy

These dying exhortations of my father were faithfully followed by my mother, for after his death she assumed the role of both father and mother to me in the sense that she never pampered me and indeed was a strict disciplinarian, never "sparing the rod to spoil the child". She quite often caned me for playing truant from Koran classes, for at the age of six I became a pupil of Sharifah Khadijah, alias Wan Neng, and her elder sister Sharifah Alawiyah, alias Wan Teh, who were second cousins of mine. They took turns to teach me to read the Koran.

Wan Neng was hot-tempered and used the cane unsparingly whenever one of her pupils was inattentive or repeatedly mispronounced Arabic words, whereas Wan Teh, besides being fairer and more beautiful than her younger sister, was possessed of a gentle character and practically never used the cane to chastise any of us.

Soon, however, she was married to Tunku Syed Hassan, one of the sons of Dato' Klana Syed Abdul Rahman, who signed the Sungai Ujong Treaty of Protection together with my grandfather Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Peral.

Tunku Hassan, after whom Jalan Tunku Hassan in Seremban was named, was a very wealthy widower who was in his late fifties when he married Wan Teh.

He had two sons by his first wife, Syed Mohamed and Syed Sentol. Both were old boys of the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar and were older than their new step-mother Sharifah Alawiyah, alias Wan Teh.

Tunku Hassan owned rubber estates in the District of Seremban and town lots in Seremban town, on one of which he had built a large two-storeyed house. Subsequently, after his marriage to Wan Teh, his business activities in Seremban

forced him to keep two establishments, one in Seremban and one in Linggi. He spent most of his time in Seremban, only returning to Linggi at the weekends.

His weekend visits to Linggi were regarded by the boys who were pupils of Wan Neng and Wan Teh as red-letter days, as it was his habit to bring large blocks of ice with him in his Hupmobile motorcar. After the Koran-reading sessions in those days, it was part of our duties to carry water from the well in large kerosene tins, two boys being assigned to carry to the house a kerosene-tinful of water with a stout *kandar* stick slung on our right shoulders.

On Saturday afternoons when Tunku Hassan returned to Linggi bringing blocks of ice, we were generally rewarded for our gratuitious labour with sizeable chunks of ice. As we had never seen ice before, we were astonished to see the "smoke" emitted by the large block of ice and shocked to feel how dreadfully cold it was and how it made our hands numb with holding it and our lips and mouth equally so when we sucked it.

Tunku Hassan also introduced the first gramophone to Linggi and the people of Kampung Tengah flocked to the house of Sharifah Rogayah to gape at the magic voice box and to listen to the inane tunes emitted by the revolving black discs.

Tunku Hassan sometimes rode back to Linggi on a small New Hudson motorcycle, the first one the young boys and girls of Linggi had ever seen. As expected, it excited their curiosity and they came in droves to see this new-fangled means of locomotion.

After her marriage, Wan Teh ceased to take turns with her younger sister Wan Neng and we were left to the tender mercies of Wan Neng. For playing truant on one occasion from her Koran class, I was severely punished by her. The punishment consisted of holding me up by the legs over a smoky fire in the kitchen range, my head being exposed to the heat and smoke of the fire. My unimaginable fright and horror at being exposed to the heat and the suffocating smoke of the fire was not mitigated by her following act; she dumped me into a large wooden rice-bin amongst sundry rats and cockroaches.

I cried and sobbed disconsolately in the darkness of the rice-bin for about a quarter of an hour, which seemed aeons to me. I was finally released from my incarceration and given a bowl of *pengat keledek*, a sweetmeat composed of sweet potatoes, to molli-

fy my wounded spirits. It didn't console me very much for having been so cruelly punished. Instead, the effect of the punishment was to fill my mind with fear and dread of Wan Neng.

I became henceforth quite regular in my attendance at Wan Neng's Koran classes. My progress in Koran-reading was further hastened by almost nightly coaching by my mother. As my grandfather Haji Mohamad Peral had seen to it that all his children were well taught in Koran-reading and the fundamental tenets of Islam, she proved to be an even better teacher than Wan Neng. She had learnt by heart many of the shorter *surah* of the Koran and sometimes she taught me to read them without even looking at the text of the Koran.

Besides Koran-reading we were also taught to read the Arabic biography of the Prophet Mohamad in the form of what is known as *berzanji*. Thursday afternoons were exclusively devoted to the teaching of these verses and we were all asked to bring with us two cents each. The two cents were known as *duit Khamis* or "Thursday money".

It was a compulsory contribution towards a small fund which was utilised by her for the purpose of making various kinds of *pengat*, *bubur*, sweetmeats and cakes to be served to all the pupils of the *berzanji* class at the end of every Thursday session of *berzanji* reading.

That was the only fee we had to pay for being taught to read the Koran and the *berzanji* and as I have explained above it was more or less refunded to us in the form of various kinds of cakes and sweetmeats served to us at the end of the *berzanji*-reading sessions on Thursday afternoons.

Apart from this trifling "fee", we were expected to help in various household chores, such as carrying water from the well, gathering firewood, and "*cangkuling*" the compound in front of the *serambi* (i.e. verandah) of Sharifah Rogayah's house.

I didn't at all mind being asked to fetch water from the well, gathering firewood, and *"cangkuling"* the compound around the house but when it came to the question of doing the shopping, I was nearly always selected to do it, as I lived in a house only a stone's throw from Sharifah Rogayah's, whereas most of the other pupils lived at Kampung Hilir and Pengkalan Kundang, about three-quarters to one mile away from our Koran teacher's house.

The shopping list was often quite a long one and was not

written down on a piece of paper. One had to memorise by rote the various items to be bought at the Chinese shop and even the fresh mind of a young boy occasionally forgot one or two items on the unwritten shopping list, so that sometimes I had to go back to the shop to buy the forgotten items.

The boy is yet unborn who can possibly retain in his memory such items as half-a-cent of *ketumbar*, one cent of *lada kering*, two cents of potatoes, half-a-cent of *mancis api*, a quarter cent of salt, one cent of *ikan bilis* and so on and so forth.

Besides the impossibility of remembering exactly some ten to twelve such items that I had been asked to buy, an additional reason for my failure to remember them all was that I was in a mighty hurry to get back to the house to join the rest of the boys in swimming in the tributary of the Linggi River which bisected the 250-acre *sawah*.

We generally swam joyfully at a place where the river was at its widest and deepest, quite undeterred by the reported sighting of one or two small crocodiles further upstream.

I was taught to swim very early in my life by my cousin, Ahmad Lobak bin Haji Abdullah, the aforementioned adopted son of my aunt Khadijah and her husband, Dato' Laksamana Abdul Majid. He made me lie on a *pelampung*, which was a float hewn out of the trunk of a *pulai* tree, and paddle with my hands. In no time at all I was able to discard the *pelampung* and swim and dive on my own like a veritable duckling, which illustrates the well-known fact that a child eager to learn and to excel in any sport or skill can be trained to be a swimmer, a tennis player, a violinist, a pianist and what have you at an age when other children are still clinging to their mother's apron strings.

During the fruit season, instead of swimming in the river we raided my grandmother's three-acre orchard at Kampung Solok, which by that time had become a deserted village as a result of its inhabitants wishing to live as near as possible to the newly-made laterite road linking Seremban with Linggi and Pengkalan Kempas.

In this deserted orchard, there was a profusion of durian, mangosteen, langsat, duku, pulasan and other fruit trees. We climbed the tall duku trees like overgrown monkeys and gorged ourselves on their fruits. Many fruits had been eaten by squirrels but there was enough left to satiate us. We split open any ripe durians that had fallen to the ground and greedily ate the

delicious *ulas*.

At the age of nine, I became the first of Wan Neng's pupils to successfully complete reading the whole Koran. It became necessary therefore that a *kenduri* (feast) should be held to celebrate my success and that the ceremony of *khatam Koran* or "The Completion of Koran-Reading" should be duly solemnised.

Early one morning, my mother shaved my head and asked me to crawl into the *reban ayam* (chicken coop) to catch a chicken for the purpose of making *rendang*, to form part of the customary gift of *pulut kuning*, or saffroned glutinous rice, and *telur merah*, hard-boiled eggs with red-coloured shells, to be presented to my Koran teacher, Wan Neng.

After the *kenduri* that night, I was dressed up in raiment similar to that of a bridegroom. This means that I had to wear a robe called *jubah* and headgear exactly like those worn by bridegrooms of the old days. I was "drummed" by a group of young men who were well-versed in Arabic songs. These songs were sung to the accompaniment of *rebana*, a form of Malay drum quite different from the *kompang* currently used to "drum" bridegrooms to the brides' houses.

On arrival at Sharifah Rogayah's house, I was welcomed by a smiling Wan Neng, apparently proud of her achievement, having succeeded in teaching me to read the whole Koran at such a comparatively young age.

I was ushered into the *tengah rumah* where her mother, Sharifah Rogayah, and her sister Wan Teh, my grandmother, my mother, aunts and close relatives had already gathered.

I was asked by Wan Neng to read selected *surah* of the Koran to test my proficiency in reading them. Wan Neng expressed her approval of my pronunciation of certain difficult Arabic words and the fluency with which I read the selected passages before the assembled audience.

The yellow *pulut* rice, *rendang ayam* and *telur merah* were duly presented to Wan Neng and Wan Teh at the conclusion of the ceremony and I was "drummed" back to the ancestral home amid the rejoicing of my mother and close relatives.

I have not so far described my school days in Linggi. As a matter of fact I was admitted to the Linggi Malay School at about the same time I began to learn Koran-reading as a pupil of Wan Neng and Wan Teh. It happened that my uncle Ibrahim, at the time of my admission to the school, had just suc-

ceeded his cousin, Ahmad bin Kapitan Ali alias Cikgu Nong, as headteacher after the latter had been appointed Penghulu of the administrative *mukim* (sub-district) of Linggi.

Incidentally Cikgu Nong was the headteacher under whom the late Pendita Za'ba had his primary education. At the same time, Pendita Za'ba was being taught *Nahu* (Arabic grammar) and elementary Arabic after school hours by Cikgu Abass bin Zakaria, one of the trio of *orang alim* or religious pundits in Linggi. The other two members of the trio were Tuan Haji Said bin Haji Jamaludin, the teacher of *Tarekat Ahmadiyah*, and my cousin Tuan Haji Mustafa bin Haji Ahmad.

Cikgu Nong was a very good and very strict teacher and many anecdotes were told of the punishments he inflicted upon his truant pupils.

My uncle, one of the early graduates of the Teachers Training College, Malacca, was an equally able teacher in addition to being an amateur journalist. He contributed many letters and articles to the *Utusan Melayu*, *Lembaga Malaya* and *Pengasoh*. Those were the days of the *halal-haram* religious controversy and of earnest newspaper discussions on the subject of Malay poverty and backwardness, and the various remedial measures proposed to alleviate them.

Furthermore, he was even more hot-tempered than his elder brother, Mohamad, who was then headteacher at the Temiang Malay School, Seremban. It was characteristic of him that no one would dare to address him whenever he was seen to walk with his eyes focused on his toes. If so addressed he would invariably flare up and tell the man or woman who was daring enough to do so to go to the devil, as it were. And whenever there were many absentees from school caused by heavy rain he would shout inconsequentially: "*Cabutkan bendera Tuan Resident!*" (i.e. "Pull down the flag of the British Resident!").

He would at the same time hurl a cylindrical ebony ruler in any direction he fancied, not with the idea of injuring any boy who had braved the downpour of rain to attend school, but simply out of pure cussedness and exasperation.

I remember very vividly the morning when a cousin of his, Yek Memah, came to the school to inform him that a son of hers was down with fever and was therefore unable to attend school. My uncle was then in one of his blackest moods and he shouted at her, "*Nyah pergi! Nyah pergi!*" ("Go away! Go away!").

As I was a new boy, I was taught by Cikgu Yassin, a Rembau man. He was apparently a very sick man, for, besides being very pale, he had a sore mouth and was constantly salivating and wiping his saliva with a dirty old rag. His poor state of health made him very gloomy and irritable and a new pupil could learn practically nothing from him. With the hindsight of a doctor, I think that the disease he was suffering from was what is known as Tropical Sprue.

He had a ten-year-old sister-in-law called Loyah, whom the older boys teased and tormented endlessly for speaking Malay in the Rembau (i.e. Minangkabau) way. Loyah must have suffered a great deal of humiliation from being subjected to this daily teasing and jeering. She took care afterwards to do the shopping chores assigned to her by her sister, Cikgu Yassin's wife, only after school hours, although the Chinese shopkeeper took some time to understand her peculiar dialect.

Cikgu Yassin soon became too ill to teach and he was replaced by Cikgu Wahid, who was not only a much better teacher but had a mild temperament which made him very well liked by the boys.

Having learnt to recognise the Arabic alphabet from my late father in his attempts to teach me to read the *jus amma*, I soon learnt to read and write *Jawi*.

As there were many *hikayat* (romances) and *syair* (verses/poems) in the ancestral home, I took to reading them without any prompting from anyone.

I first listened intently to my mother while she read aloud in the sing-song manner the *hikayat* and *syair* were read in those days. Having a good memory for words, phrases and sentences, I had no difficulty whatsoever afterwards in reading the particular *hikayat* or *syair* that my mother had been reading. Thus it was that I read and re-read with precocious avidity the many *hikayat* and *syair* available to me at home, and others that I could beg, borrow or steal from close relatives.

Another well-known teller of folk-tales was Cik Zainab, a widow of Datuk Kelana Syed Abdul Rahman, who lived in a house near the Linggi Malay School. There, too, we used to *bertandang tidur* in order to listen with rapt attention to her repertoire of folk tales.

I have alluded above to the fact that my mother was a voracious reader of *hikayat* and *syair*. Futhermore, both my aunts

Khadijah and Rashidah were also avid readers of these old romances. As a matter of fact, most Linggi men and women were literate in *Jawi*, although they had not undergone a formal school education. I have in my possession several specimens of their *Jawi* handwriting, some of which are fine specimens of calligraphy.

Their proficiency in reading and writing Jawi was undoubtedly a cultural heritage from their ancestors, Tok Awaludin and Tok Serilah, which they and their children brought with them from Riau when they migrated to Penajis, Rembau in 1775.

One of my classmates was Yazid bin Ahmad. As both his father and mother were first cousins of my mother's, his relationship to me was what is described as *saudara dua pupu* (second cousin). As my uncle Ibrahim bin Dato' Muda Haji Mohd. Peral had married Yazid's half-sister Woke, his mother's daughter by her first husband, our relationship was rendered doubly close.

He always managed to beat me in tests and examinations; he was always the first boy in the class and I, the second.

As his father Ahmad bin Kapitan Ali, alias Cikgu Nong, was my uncle's predecessor as headteacher of the Linggi Malay School and was reputed to be a very good teacher, I suspected that he must have been well-coached by his father at home. Furthermore, my uncle, having married his half-sister, happened to live in the same house as Yazid, his parents and his two younger brothers. He too might have helped Yazid to do his homework. On the other hand, I had no one to coach me at home and help me do my homework. I attribute my position as second in tests and examinations during my school days in Linggi to these circumstances.

Having learnt *Jawi*, we were taught to read and write *Rumi* which in those days was called "*tulisan Roman*". *Rumi* we found considerably easier to master as the spelling of Malay words in *Rumi* was based on rational phonetic principles, whereas *Jawi* spelling could only be described as chaotic. Incidentally, it was only many years later that Za'ba successfully systematised *Jawi* spelling.

In Standard Three, another Cikgu, whose name I have forgotten, taught us to write compositions by reading to us stereotyped essays entitled "*Darihal Serigala*", "*Darihal Kereta Api*", "*Darihal* This" and "*Darihal* That". We were then expected to

regurgitate in our exercise books what he had read to us.

I remember what a hopeless task it was for a boy of ten to write sensibly about an animal, of a "picture" which he had never even seen. As for the *keretapi* (train), although I myself had been a passenger in one before my admission to the Linggi Malay School, it was *kereta* beyond the ken of the rest of the class.

The pupils of Standard IV and Standard V were taught by my uncle. The reader for Standard IV was a prose anthology in *Jawi*, containing excerpts from *Hikayat Sang Sambah*, *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*, *Sejarah Melayu*, *Hikayat Isma Yatim* and *Hikayat Indera Mengindera*.

I was enchanted by the beautiful style in which *Hikayat Sang Sambah* and *Hikayat Indera Mengindera* were written. Having already read so many *hikayat*, I thought that nowhere else had I read of a woman's beauty described in such alluring terms as in *Hikayat Sang Sambah*. I refer to the beauty of Dewi Derma Dewi, the young woman into whom the Hindu God Vishnu had transformed a *Nagasari flower*.

As for *Hikayat Indera Mengindera*, four particular *pantun* appealed to my nascent literary taste. These *pantun* were addressed by one of the many birds that had foregathered at the entrance of the *taman* to welcome the young Prince Indera Mengindera into the garden where the *Tuan Puteri* or Princess whom he loved awaited him. I quote them below:

Batang melampai tumbuh chendawan,
Mari diambil dewa angkasa;
Sampailah tuan raja pahlawan,
Tiada endah akan temasya.
Merak emas burong dewata,
Mati di panah dewa di awan;
Padang emas gunong permata,
Bilakan sama dengan bangsawan;
Dang lima menyimpul tali,
Anak geroda terbang ke awan;
Silalah tuanku saleh kembali,
Paduka adinda cintakan tuan;
Cempedak dari Rakan,
Merpati di atas kota;
Jikalau tidak tuan dapatkan,
Matilah adinda dengan bercinta.

Although I have since read and heard even more felicitous *pantun*, I thought then as I still think now that the four quatrains elegantly express what a charming young prince Indera Mengindera was.

My uncle Ibrahim, who had a flair for what constituted a good style in prose or verse, taught us to appreciate the finer points of classical Malay literature. He himself had written quite a few *syair* of the didactic genre, and had contributed many prose articles and letters to the *Utusan Melayu*, *Lembaga Melayu* and *Pengasoh*.

The reader used in Standard V was *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, printed in the *Rumi* script. I was enthralled to read about the exploits of Hang Tuah and his four inseparable companions, Hang Jebat, Hang Kasturi, Hang Lekir and Hang Lekiu. I remember being greatly moved by the realism and pathos of the mortal combat between Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat.

During the first half of my year in Standard V, *Utusan Melayu* sponsored a literary competition on the theme "*Jika Saya Menjadi Raja*" ("If I Were a King"), Standards IV and V schoolboys throughout Malaya being eligible to compete. My uncle selected Yazid and me to participate in this competition.

Having read so many *hikayat* and *syair* about Sultans and Maharajas who ruled their countries, I thought I could easily tackle the subject. After a couple of days imagining myself a just and merciful ruler, I set about writing my article on "If I Were a King".

When my uncle read it through, I was shocked when he contemptuously rejected it as pure trash. He railed at me for my incompetence and said that Yazid had written quite a good essay and asked me why I was such a stupid fool, compared to Yazid.

He told me to write a much better essay than the one he had rejected and produce it for him to read the following morning.

I naturally felt very frightened and dejected to hear him railing and fuming at me, and, in that frame of mind, could not be expected to write a better article than the one he had rejected. However, out of fear I had to obey his peremptory command.

As expected, he again contemptuously rejected my second effort and said that I was a boy who could not be relied upon to write sensibly on any subject under the sun.

He thereupon started to write a few preliminary paragraphs on the theme "If I Were a King" in his own high-flown style

and tossed the sheet of paper to me and told me to complete the article that very night.

The resulting mixture of his first few paragraphs in his ornate Malay and the rest of the article in the pedestrian prose of a schoolboy of ten was at last accepted by my uncle with a shake of his head, as if he wanted to say "*Tak ada rotan, akar pun jadi*". ("If rattan is unobtainable, a liana will do"; or to take the equivalent saying in English: "Half a loaf is better than none".)

However, neither Yazid nor I won the prize in the competition. I do not remember who the winner was among the hundreds of Standard IV and Standard V schoolboys who must have submitted their screeds on "If I Were a King".

Whenever my uncle had to punish his erring pupils, he was more severe in the tirades he would address to me or the caning he would inflict upon me than he was to any other pupil of his.

I don't know what motivated him to be ultra-strict in disciplining me. Was it because I was an orphan with no father to protect me, or because in her anxiety that I should not only be properly taught my lessons but also be severely hauled over the coals for the faults and failings that the average schoolboy of ten is only too prone to reveal to a vigilant teacher, my mother had given my uncle *carte blanche* to do to me whatever he thought proper and wise?

There could be no doubt that my mother had perfectly good reasons for doing so, despite the very strict manner in which she herself tried to bring me up, for there were occasions when my boon companions and I behaved in a very wild manner.

As an instance of my wild ways, I will cite the fact that one day there was a very heavy downpour. As was habitual with young boys during those days, it was our delight to *mandi hujan*, that is to say, strip ourselves naked, run, gambol in the rain and splash about in the pools of water.

It happened on that particular day my three playmates, Mubarak, Abdul Kuddas and Khalid persuaded me, two years their junior, to join them in chasing a number of ducks that were swimming merrily in the tributary of the Linggi River in the middle of the *sawah*. Having driven the ducks out of the river, we chased them all over the *sawah* until Mubarak caught one of them and proceeded to immerse it in the river. After repeated immersions, we were shocked to find it limp and lifeless.

A man who happened to be casting his net in the river some

distance away approached us and saw Mubarak holding the dead duck and accused him of having deliberately killed it. He told the owner of the ducks what had befallen one of them.

Our escapade soon became known to the *kampung* people and the four of us became the butts of snide remarks by our school fellows and of obscene jokes by some adults. Among the latter, Khalid's step-father, Pak Woke Pakeh, jocularly dubbed us with the most obscene names imaginable.

Naturally such a wild escapade was soon reported to my uncle Ibrahim, who after castigating us with such a severe talking-to as made my own hair stand on end, caned us with the rattan so severely that I urinated in my sarong.

I recall another incident which in my case almost ended fatally. A number of my playmates and I happened to notice some stout lianas hanging over a bank near my friend Samad's house. We all thought it would be great fun if we were to hang onto the lianas and swing forwards and backwards over the bank. So each of us caught hold of a liana and soon we were excitedly swinging on our *buaian tunggal* as we called them, totally oblivious that we risked their suddenly snapping and causing us to fall heavily to the ground below the bank.

In my case, every time I swung forward my liana invariably came in contact with the branch of a tree growing below the bank, thus causing a gradual erosion of the liana until it finally broke.

I fell down to the ground below and was so severely concussed that I became unconscious. My lower incisor teeth pierced through my lower lip, causing an inch-long gash in the inner lining of the lip and a shorter lacerated wound in the skin outside. One of my two upper central incisor teeth was driven into the gum and its bony socket so that it became shortened by half.

I was told later that my playmates panicked when they realised that I had fallen to the ground and been knocked unconscious. Thinking perhaps that I had died as a result of the fall, they ran away helter-skelter. Samad, however, told his mother what had happened. She at once came down the bank and found me unconscious, but still breathing.

She therefore sought the help of a couple of men who carried me to my house. My mother screamed on seeing me unconscious and bleeding from the cut in my lower lip.

In a short while, however, I regained consciousness and my mother's fear that I might die was replaced by the sheer joy of seeing me alive after all.

I do not remember how long I took to recover from the after-effects of the concussion nor how long the wound in my lower lip took to heal completely.

All that I can distinctly recall is that when I had recovered sufficiently to be up and about, my mother decided to take me to the tomb of Sheikh Ahmad Majanu, generally known as *Keramat Sungai Undang*, about three miles from Linggi and a stone's throw from the river port of Pengkalan Kempas on the road to Port Dickson.*

Nasi kunyit, *rendang ayam* and *telur merah* were prepared by my mother and aunt Khadijah, and all our close relatives as well as my *buaian tunggal* playmates were invited to accompany us to the tomb of the putative saint. Five bullock-carts were hired by my mother to convey us to the *keramat*.

A pilgrimage to *Keramat Sungai Undang* was, in those days, regarded not as a solemn thanksgiving trip to a holy tomb or shrine, but more as an occasion for rejoicing and revelry when everyone would dress in his or her finery.

My playmates and I were all agog with excitement. During the journey, the bullock-cart drivers decided to "show off" their prowess in driving the cumbersome bullock-carts, with their huge iron-tyred wheels, by engaging in a race. The deafening noise created as the cart wheels rolled crazily over the laterite road, the rattling of the wooden carts and the raucous cries of the drivers as they goaded their bullocks to run faster and faster, only served to increase our delight and excitement.

On our arrival at the *keramat*, my mother stripped me of my clothes and bathed me with *air tolak baja* (water to ward off evils) after which a long prayer was intoned by a *lebai*, beseeching the saint to intercede with God so that further calamities should not befall me or anyone else present on that occasion.

Then the various dishes that had been brought along were distributed and a good meal was had by all.

There followed the inevitable visit to Pengkalan Kempas, then a bustling little township and a thriving river port, visited

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* See J.M. Gullick's, "Sungai Ujong", *JMBRAS*, 1949, pp. 55-56.

twice weekly by a coastal steamship from Singapore*

The surrounding British-owned rubber estates made use of this port to export their bales of rubber to Singapore. Consequently there were several godowns belonging to their estates at Pengkalan Kempas. There was a customs station there, whose officers were entrusted with the collection of export duties from the estate managers. A police-station manned by ten constables under a sergeant saw to it that these godowns were well-guarded. It also served as the centre for the registration of births and deaths in the *kampung* within a four-mile radius of the police-station.

As it was only three miles from Linggi, it was frequently visited by the people either for the purpose of selling their rubber to the rubber dealers of Pengkalan Kempas or for the purchase of consumer goods not available at Linggi or Pengkalan Kundang.

The journey to and from Pengkalan Kempas was generally done on bicycles, which were available for hire from one of the Chinese shops at Pengkalan Kundang at the rate of ten cents per hour.

When I resumed my schooling immediately after the pilgrimage to the *Keramat Sungai Undang*, I found, to my dismay, that Yazid had been promoted by my uncle to Standard V and that I had been left to stew in my own juice in Standard IV.

I naturally was very disappointed that I had not been promoted as well, as I thought that there was really not such a great difference between Yazid's performance in class and mine as to merit his promotion over my head. I remember thinking that my uncle was discriminating against me in favour of his brother-in-law and that he had been influenced by his two cousins, Yazid's father and mother, and by his wife, Yazid's half-sister.

Thus it was that Yazid was able to pass the final Standard V Government examination while I did not complete my primary education at the Linggi Malay School before being admitted to the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar.

I have described how my uncle in his relationship with me as his pupil was unduly strict and even harsh and that he punished me more severely and castigated me with harsher words than he

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* On account of the silting of the Linggi River it is now no longer navigable, so that Pengkalan Kempas has for some years been abandoned as a river port

did with his other pupils. He seemed to think that having an orphaned nephew as his pupil gave him the prescriptive right to deal with me as he pleased. This feeling of being harshly treated by my uncle only served to intensify my fear and dislike of him.

His wife, Woke, Yazid's half-sister, had borne him four of five children. They all died in their infancy of one fell disease or another, leaving one surviving daughter, Puteh.

Aged 12 months, the little girl was a very sickly child, whose body was covered with sores.

It was about this time that, like a bolt from the blue, my uncle persuaded my mother to allow me to look after his little daughter after school hours, as his wife was then in a poor state of health and unable to look after the child satisfactorily.

For a boy of ten to carry a sickly, fretful child, whose body was covered with sores, was not exactly an enjoyable assignment, especially as it prevented me from joining my playmates in the various games then being played in Linggi.

Again I took this form of infliction as a form of discrimination against me in favour of his brother-in-law, Yazid. As the latter was living in the same house with him, why on earth didn't my uncle ask Yazid to help look after his little niece?

After about a fortnight of having served as a juvenile male nurse for my little cousin, Puteh, Kak Woke recovered sufficiently to be able to resume her duties as a mother and I was at last released from the hateful task. Not many weeks later the poor child died.

During my school days at Linggi, the Negri Sembilan Inspector of Schools was Mr. M.B. Brockwell. He was a handsome, well set-up man of about thirty, with wavy brown hair and a jovial manner. I remember particularly one visit that he paid to the Linggi Malay School. He came in a brand-new Model T Ford, the first one that I had ever set my eyes on.

During this visit, he took off his jacket and in his shirt sleeves he demonstrated to us how calisthenics should be performed, including the pumping exercise on the school floor.

He was a very kind man and apparently fond of boys, for at the end of his visit he packed some ten of us small boys into his Model T Ford and took us for a ride to Pengkalan Kempas, on the way stopping at *Keramat Sungai Undang* to see for himself what the tomb of Sheikh Ahmad Majanu was really like.

However, the most memorable visit paid to the school during

my time there was that of Dr. (later Sir) Richard Winstedt, in his capacity as Assistant Director of Education.

I remember vividly one fine morning when Sir Richard unexpectedly turned up at the school. At the time of his visit the school was very much in need of having new *atap* as the roof was leaking very badly. In fact, there were numerous small holes in the *atap*, which had the effect of making the roof resemble the sky on a starry night.

Sir Richard asked the boys in Standard IV some questions on the lesson they were learning and satisfied himself that the answers were correct. He was apparently very pleased to find that the boys had been well taught by my uncle.

And then he gazed a the *atap* roof and asked the class how they would describe it.

Without a moment's hesitation, one bright boy whose name I have forgotten, answered that the roof was *berbintang-bintang* (star-spangled). Sir Richard then and there congratulated the boy for his clever answer.

My uncle's face flushed with obvious delight, which Sir Richard did not fail to notice and which he reciprocated by telling my uncle that he was very pleased with the high standard of teaching at the school, as exemplified by the answers given by the boys in Standard IV.

Sir Richard then proceeded to write his encomium of the school and its headmaster in the Visitor's Book, bade my uncle goodbye and left for Port Dickson.

On reading Sir Richard's remarks in the Visitor's Book, my uncle pranced delightedly on the school floor and one latent aspect of his character was thus revealed to us for the first time, namely, his spontaneous response to praise ungrudgingly bestowed and well-merited.

For some months before Sir Richard's visit, my uncle had been trying hard to learn English. He was being taught by Inche Jalal bin Mohamad, an Old Boy of the Malay College.

My uncle turned out to be quite an apt pupil of Inche Jalal. One of the English sayings he had learnt from the latter was "What man has done, man can do", and he was never tired of drumming it into us to encourage us to excel in our school work.

This saying he proudly repeated to us all after Sir Richard had left the school, explaining its meaning in Malay. He cited what he had been able to accomplish in giving the boys a sound

knowledge of the Malay language and proudly exhorted us to emulate him.

Not many months later he was, on Sir Richard Winstedt's instructions, transferred to Singapore, where he served as Sir Richard's amanuensis and as such, collaborated with him in writing the book *Kitab Loghat Malayu*, published in 1921.

While he was stationed in Singapore, he lived in a rented wooden house at Gelang Serai, that insalubrious, unhygienic suburb, so frequently flooded during the monsoon season. I think it was there that he contracted tuberculosis that was to be the cause of his death at the relatively early age of 40.

In any case, after two years of working as Sir Richard's amanuensis, he began to complain of periodic bouts of P.U.O. [Pyrexia (fever) of Unknown Origin]. Sir Richard therefore approved his transfer to the Sultan Idris Training College as the Malay master there under Mr. O.T. Dussek, the Principal of the College.

He was appointed editor of *Chendramata*, the College magazine to which past and present students of the College, as well as the graduates of the former Malacca and Matang Teachers Training Colleges, contributed articles.

While working at the S.I.T.C., not even Mr. Dussek's autocratic manner of running the College could subdue my uncle's choleric temper. For instance, one day while he was busy trying to lick the *Chendramata* into shape, Mr. Dussek came to see him about something or other. He got into a heated argument with Mr. Dussek, the outcome of which was that he scattered all the articles which had been contributed to *Chendramata* on the floor, and shouted at Mr. Dussek, *"Saya bukan bekerja dengan Mr. Dussek, tetapi dengan Kerajaan Persekutuan"* ("I am not working for Mr. Dussek, but for the Federation Government").

Either because Mr. Dussek was not a vindictive principal or perhaps because he knew that my uncle was a protege of Sir Richard Winstedt, and that he had a difficult task to perform as editor of the *Chendramata* (which he was trying so hard to shape into a worthy rival of the *Majallah Guru*, which was edited by his elder brother, Mohamed bin Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Peral), he chose to ignore my uncle's tantrum.

A Malay school of those days was constructed on pillars like the traditional Malay house. It was not divided into classrooms, so the five classes corresponding to the five standards were

arranged haphazardly according to the whims and fancies of the headteacher. The school was roofed with *atap nipah*.

The boys of Standards I and II were not provided with desks and chairs and had to sit on the floor. It was only the boys of Standards III, IV and V who were provided with long benches to sit on and long "desks" on which they could write with some comfort.

Standard I to Standard III pupils were provided with slates on which they wrote with slate pencils bought from the local Chinese shops. It was only the pupils in Standards IV and V who had to buy exercise books and pencils.

School uniforms were unknown in those days, the boys wearing all sorts of multi-coloured Malay *baju* and sarong. It was compulsory for every boy to wear a *songkok*, which in those days might be in any colour, black, green, blue, brown, violet and red. Some of the boys wore *baju kot*, a type of jacket chosen for its durability and worn by its owner for several days at a time before being given to his mother to be washed. Similarly some of the *songkok* worn by the boys looked so much the worse for wear that they resembled birds' nests more than anything else.

All that I have described above indicates the low priority accorded by the "powers-that-be" to Malay vernacular education as compared to education in the urban English schools. It was openly declared that the education provided at the rural Malay schools was designed to make the sons of peasants better peasants and better *padi* planters than their parents had been.

I think it was my uncle's rather harsh treatment when I was a schoolboy, combined with my father's earlier coercive way of trying to make me a religious infant prodigy, to be succeeded, at the age of six, by Wan Neng's unsparing use of the rattan during my Koran-reading lessons and her cruel treatment of me for playing truant from her Koran-reading class, that transformed me into a shy, sensitive and nervous type of boy.

I remember that on two separate occasions at night, I walked in my sleep during a mild attack of fever; on the first occasion, my mother, upon waking up early in the morning, discovered that I was missing from her side.

In her alarm she found that the front door of the house had been opened, and, going downstairs, she found me asleep on a pile of firewood under the house. On the second occasion, my aunt Rashidah on waking up found me asleep by her side. I had

left my mother's room in the kitchen part of the house and in my sleep had walked to hers.

Somnambulism is generally attributed by doctors to a nervous temperament in a child and I have no doubt that in my case it was the true cause, as it was of the attacks of enuresis or bed-wetting which occasionally afflicted me. Fortunately, these two conditions ceased altogether when I attained the age of ten.

It would not, however, be true to say that I was a miserable or unhappy child. I have already described two of the many escapades in which I was personally involved. They were others equally mischievous. Khalid, who was my second cousin, his father being my mother's first cousin, was associated with me in stealing pineapples from Haji Mat Amin's *dusun* (orchard).

On another occasion, prowling about Kampung Hilir in search of a bicycle pump to steal, Khalid and I noticed a bicycle leaning against the fence round the house of my maternal grand-uncle, Dato' Panglima Besar Haji Mohd. Bakir. We therefore stealthily approached the bicycle and stripped it of its pump.

Returning to Kampung Tengah, we removed the outer casing of the pump, retaining the inner tin pipe which we converted into a muzzle-loading, homemade gun by boring a hole near the inner end into which a fuse was inserted.

As there was a keg of gunpowder in my house, which my grandfather had used to prime his cannons and muzzle-loading muskets during his tenure of office as Dato' Muda of Linggi, Khalid and I ascended to the *peran* or loft of the kitchen part of the house where the gunpowder was kept.

We took a cigarette-tinful of gunpowder and having filled the tin pipe with the required amount of gunpowder and plugged it with coconut coir, we took our "gun" to the *sawah*, where a number of swallows were seen to be flying about.

We waited until one of them had alighted on a tree stump. We then inserted the fuse, which had been soaked in kerosene oil, into the hole at the back end of the tin pipe which we laid on another tree stump. We next filled the pipe with a number of small pebbles and taking careful aim at the swallow, we lighted the fuse with a match.

Our gun went off with a bang, the swallow flew off unscathed, and to our consternation we discovered that the nut or bolt at the back end of our gun had been blown off because we

had not taken the precaution of providing the gun with a butt against which it would recoil.

It was fortunate that after lighting the fuse neither Khalid nor I was standing immediately behind the gun. Otherwise it is quite probable that one of us would have been seriously injured.

Another prank in which a number of us participated was to organise a sort of "picnic" in the *belukar*, on the right-hand side of the path from Kampung Tengah to the Malay School. Syed Ahmad bin Syed Abu Bakar of Rasah, who was one of the three Rasah boys who had been sent by their parents to undergo their primary education at the Linggi Malay School, always had some money, and he bought several loaves of bread from the bakery owned by an Indian Muslim near the school. We next cajoled Abdul Haq, more popularly called Bedol, to pilfer several tins of sardines and bottles of lemonade from his old father, Pak Itam Mek's sundry shop.

We then proceeded to the *belukar* and opening the tins of sardines, we gorged ourselves on the bread-and-sardines and drank the lemonade to our great satisfaction. To this day I do not know whether old Pak Itam Mek ever found out that several tins of sardines and bottles of lemonade were missing from the shelves of his shop.

During the kite-flying season some of us depended upon Bedol to provide us with spools of thread to fly our kites. That he was always willing to oblige us by plundering his father's stock-in-trade was either due to his innate good nature or to his fear that we bigger boys might bully him.

In those days kite-flying was one of the most popular sports among Linggi young men and boys. The boys, of course, flew the simpler triangular kites which they could make themselves, but the young men vied with one another in making and flying the very large type of kite made to resemble a hawk and consequently known as *layang-layang lang* (eagle kites).

These large kites were all equipped with vibratory devices so that when they had attained a considerable height, the wind, unimpeded by trees and other obstructions, caused the vibrators to emit a sound called *dengung* which could be heard from the ground and from a considerable distance away.

Occasionally the ardent kite-fliers would engage in a competition. Each would attempt to down his opponent's kite or cause it to become entangled among the branches of a tree by any

means short of cutting the string of the kite with a knife.

Before the competition started it was a common practice for competitors to rub the strings of their kites with ground glass. Whether this was an effective method of bringing the other fellow down was problematical, for quite obviously two strings similarly treated with ground glass would counteract the effect that the one was intended to have on the other.

In fact what usually caused these large kites to fall was a sudden lull in the wind, or a change in its direction.

I was neither good at making kites nor at flying them. My second cousin, Amir bin Jaafar, an adept at making small triangular kites, could always be relied upon to make kites for me and when it came to the question of flying them, I never succeeded in getting them more than a few feet off the ground.

The game of marbles as played by Malay boys is quite unique.

A round hole, slightly bigger than the marble, was generally dug in the ground. The competitors, standing in a row about five yards from the hole, would then take turns to roll their marbles with the object of getting their marbles into the hole or as near to it as possible.

The one who succeeded in getting his marble into the hole or nearest to it would then be permitted to shoot his marble at the other marbles, starting with the one which was the second closest to the hole.

In making the shot, the marble was held between the thumb and index finger of the left hand. Then, with the middle finger of the right hand held firmly against the marble, the player took careful aim at his opponent's marble and released his own. Having sent the latter's marble some distance away, he disposed of the second opponent's marble in a similar manner until finally all had been disposed of.

The player or players whose marbles had been shot off beyond an agreed distance were declared losers. It generally happened, however, that the player did not succeed in knocking all his opponent's marbles beyond the required limit, so that he had to take a second shot at those that still remained.

I became so good at this game that I rarely failed to hit an opponent's marble five yards away from me and when Syed Ahmad bin Syed Abu Bakar left Linggi to enter the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar, I became the acknowledged champion

marble player in Linggi.

Among adults and young men of the *kampung* top spinning was undoubtedly the most popular team game. Large tops made of *penaga* and *kuran* (hardwoods) were used. The cords with which the tops were wound and spun were made of the tough fibrous underbark of the *terap* tree.

As a rule the teams were composed of four men on each side. The referee tossed a coin to decide which team would start the game. Meanwhile each team started to spin its own tops as close to one another as possible. The first member of the team that won this "toss" would then proceed to knock down one of the tops of the opponents spinning on the ground with his own. He had to do so without knocking down any of the other tops of the opposing team.

Silat was taught to teenagers and young men by Pak Long Aman and his younger brother, Pak Uda Kassim.

The former was a burly, good-humoured man of forty-five or so, who was also an expert *kampung mudin* or circumciser.

He had a *gelanggang* at Pengkalan Kundang. It was thickly overlaid with several layers of very fine sand to cushion the effect of a heavy fall on the ground, an inevitable accompaniment of *silat* practice.

I watched, agape with wonder and excitement, during one of their demonstrations to their pupils, when Pak Long Aman delivered a resounding kick on the buttock of his younger brother, Pak Uda Kassim, which sent him sprawling several feet away on the sanded ground.

In contrast to his elder brother, Pak Uda Kassim was moderately tall and muscular, but was only about half the size of Pak Long Aman. As such, he was more agile in his movements and more artistic in his *silat* postures and his acrobatic manoeuvres to parry the blows delivered by his big brother or by one of the pupils.

During the rainy season, the tributary of the Linggi River near the row of plank-walled and *atap*-roofed shophouses at Pengkalan Kundang overflowed its banks and submerged the bridge spanning the river.

My playmates and I were quite undaunted by the increased depth of the river and the swiftness of the current.

We plunged into the river on one side of the bridge, and diving under it, emerged unscathed on the other; we then battled

our way against the strong current, and landed safely on the river-bank.

None of us had to be rescued from imminent danger of drowning, as all of us had been taught very well how to swim at about the age of six in the smaller tributary of the Linggi River which bisected the *sawah*.

Due to the flooding of the Linggi River further upstream near Seremban, the ponds on the outskirts of Seremban town, in which the Chinese used to rear a specie of freshwater fish called *ikan tongsan* (Chinese carp), were similarly flooded. The result was that many of these fish were carried by the strong current downstream as far Linggi and beyond. They were to be seen feeding on the grass in the flooded marshland on each side of the road to Pengkalan Kempas.

The sport of spearing these fish with *lembing*, *tombak* and other pronged instruments became, for the nonce, the favourite diversion of Malays and Chinese alike, while we boys watched with wonder and amazement.

Because the road to Pengkalan was flooded under two to three feet of water, the buses then plying between Seremban and Pengkalan Kempas were unable to negotiate the flooded part of the road.

The drivers could easily persuade us boys to help push these buses out of the flood water onto the dry road either on the Pengkalan Kempas or the Seremban side.

The combined strength of ten of us was generally sufficient to do the job.

The five cents with which each of us was rewarded for our help was, in those days, an ample sum to enable us to glut ourselves with *kacang goreng*, *bepang*, or Malay cakes.

When my mother heard of my daredevil swimming and diving activities in the swollen Pengkalan Kundang branch of the Linggi River, she was naturally much distressed, as she was fearful that I might drown myself or be caught and devoured by a crocodile.

She used to say to me tearfully, "What is to become of you, Said? You are so wild in your ways that no one seems able to control you. Don't you know that you are an orphan and that you must behave yourself and not be a source of constant worry to me?"

She then arranged for me to be taught to read the Koran in

accordance to the strict rules of *tejuid*, that is by pronouncing each word of the Koran correctly.

It was true that the ceremony of *Khatan Koran* had been duly solemnised when I was nine years of age to signify that I had been taught to read the whole Koran.

But then both Wan Neng and Wan Teh, my former tutors, were only ordinary Koran teachers. They had no special qualification, and could not be considered authorities on how each word of the Koran should be pronounced.

Such a qualified person was *Lebai* (*Cikgu*) Abass, the eldest of the trio of *orang alim*, who made the Linggi of the first two decades of the twentieth century famous as a centre of religious studies in Negri Sembilan. Unlike Tuan Haji Mohd. Said and my cousin Haji Mustafa, he had not been to Mecca to pursue his religious studies. However, he had been a brilliant pupil of Tuan Din (Haji Jamaludin bin Idris), the father of Tuan Haji Said, the devout teacher of *tarekat*. Although he could not speak Arabic so well as Tuan Haji Said and Haji Mustafa, his knowledge of *fekah* or Islamic jurisprudence was unrivalled because of his photographic memory, and even the former two *orang alim* sometimes consulted him on some knotty problems in this area.

He was a very good teacher of *tejuid*, so I joined a class consisting of Syed Ahmad bin Syed Abu Bakar of Rasah, the two sons of Dato' Bandar Haji Ahmad of Sungai Ujong, Raja Harun of Pantai and several other Linggi boys. Raja Harun was a boarder at Lebai Abass's house.

In addition to *tejuid* we were taught *Rukun Islam*, *Rukun Imam* and what acts were *halal*, *haram*, *makruh* and *harus*, how to perform the *wudzuk* or pre-prayer ablutions and the various Arabic formulae to be said during the five daily prayers. In other words, we were taught the fundamental tenets of Islam.

In addition to formal teaching by Lebai Abass, at home I often heard discussions on religious subjects between my grandmother Siti Zaleha, my mother, Aunt Khadijah and other close relatives. It may be said, therefore, that as a boy I was brought up in an extremely religious household and the terrors of Hell and the unimaginable delights of Heaven were instilled into my mind very early in life.

My cousin, Haji Mustafa bin Haji Ahmad, after eighteen years of religious studies in Mecca, had become as puritanical in

his religious views as the *Wahabi*. He was in fact responsible for ordering the demolition of the brick walls on three sides of our grandfather, Dato' Muda Haji Mohd. Peral's, grave.

He did not, however, tamper with the tomb of our great-grandfather, Dato' Muda Haji Mohd. Salleh, as the tomb was and is regarded as a *keramat* at which the people of Linggi used to go on pilgrimage for the purpose of making offerings of bananas, saffroned glutinous rice and other sweetmeats The people of Linggi even now go to his tomb to perform the *tahlil* on the evening of the second day of the Hari Raya Idilfitri.

An oral tradition has been handed down to the people of Linggi concerning the supposed saintliness of Dato' Muda Haji Mohd. Salleh. It is said that, by gathering the people of Linggi at a *ratib* ceremony at this house one night (a ceremony in which the Arabic formula *"la-ila-ha-il-lallah"* was chanted over and over again at ever increasing tempo and loudness) an attack on Linggi by Rembau forces was averted. The Rembau men apparently thought that hundreds of Linggi men were ready to repel their attack and so retreated to their *kampung*.

When I was ten years old, my mother decided that it was about time that I should be circumcised together with my second cousin, Khalid bin Endut. A preliminary *kenduri* was held the day before the actual circumcision, to which all close relatives were invited. At the conclusion of the feast, a *doa selamat* was duly recited by the Lebai Abass.

Early the next morning, Khalid and I were by order of the *mudin* or circumciser told to take a bath and immerse ourselves in water for an hour so as to deaden the pain of the actual circumcision. Ice would have been more effective in anaesthetising our foreskins, but it was not then obtainable in Linggi.

The *mudin* who circumcised us was Mat Asim Gewang. Khalid, being older than I, was the first to be circumcised. He was made to sit on a banana trunk to which the *penyepit*, which separated the foreskin from the glans penis, was transfixed.

Khalid did not cry or even squirm as the *mudin's* very sharp razor cut off his foreskin and the *mudin* applied the styptic made of cobwebs and the scrapings from the under bark of a certain tree. His wound was then loosely bandaged with a strip of white cotton cloth and the bandage was then suspended to a string tied round his waist.

The same procedures were repeated when my turn came to

be circumcised. The actual cutting of the foreskin with an extremely sharp razor was so rapidly done that the pain was minimal and the *mudin* was so dextrous in applying the styptic and bandaging my wounded penis that I rather enjoyed being circumcised. The styptic was so effective in arresting the expected bleeding that both Khalid and I lost very little blood.

It was only on the following day when our penises began to swell and the inevitable sepsis set in that we experienced actual pain, which became excruciating when on the third day, the bandage and styptic had to be removed by a process known as *tanggal kundang*.

This process involved the slow sprinkling of lukewarm water on the bandage which had by then become stuck fast to the styptic and the wound. When, after one half-an-hour of this painful ordeal, we at last succeeded in detaching the bandage and the styptic from the wound we found to our astonishment that it was covered all over with stinking pus. Again we resorted to the painful process of wiping away the pus with cotton wool soaked in lukewarm water.

My aunt Khadijah's husband had procured some boric acid powder from the Tampin Linggi dresser in charge of the estate dispensary and it was with this mildly antiseptic powder that we sprinkled our wounds.

It didn't seem to be very effective in controlling the infection, so it actually took three weeks for our wounds to heal completely.

However, we became ambulant on the fourth day after the circumcision, although we had to walk with our legs far apart and had to hold our sarongs in such a manner as to prevent contact between them and our wounds.

During the three weeks which the wounds took to heal, we had to observe the inevitable *pantang*, which meant that we were not allowed to eat anything other than rice and roasted salt fish for lunch and dinner. My mother, however, made *roti canai* for us to eat for breakfast and pancakes for tea.

At about this time my uncle, Mohamed bin Dato' Muda, after two years as Assistant Master at the Teachers Training College, Matang, under Mr. A. Keir, returned to Seremban to take charge of the Malay School, Temiang, Seremban, as its headteacher.

The late Pendita Za'ba who was then a pupil of St. Paul's Institution, Seremban, stayed with him at his government quar-

ters next to the school.

It was while staying with my uncle that he began to take a serious interest in the Malay language and there can be no doubt that my uncle's prolific contributions to Malay newspapers, such as the *Utusan Melayu*, *Lembaga Melayu* and *Pengasoh* stimulated him to emulate my uncle as a writer in later years.

I was, therefore, greatly surprised when I read Haji Abdul Majid's unfinished autobiography entitled *The Wandering Thoughts of a Dying Man*, and came across the following passage:

> Later when I saw some Johore friends, I was told that the articles of Zainal Abidin which struck me as very sensible were really the views and opinions of many Johore leaders in whose company he moved. Encik Mohamed bin Haji Ilyas, Head Official Translator of the Johore Government, told me that he knew Encik Zainal Abidin when he first came to Johore as a teacher. He certainly did not know as much Malay as when he had associated in the Johore Literary Society where he learned much that there was to know about the Malay language.

In this otherwise quite interesting autobiography Haji Abdul Majid applied to Za'ba the epithets of an "unrefined", "ungrateful" and an "unintelligent" man, while he himself indulged in a paean of self-praise concerning his greatness as a writer, grammarian, religious thinker, footballer, lover, billiard and skittles player, raconteur, etc.

In saying that it was my uncle, Mohamed bin Dato' Muda, who was really Za'ba's literary mentor and who inspired him to take an interest in the Malay language, I am actuated by what I positively know to be the truth.

While defending the late Pendita Za'ba, I am not saying that he was altogether free from the faults and failings attributed to him by his arch rival, Tuan Haji Abdul Majid.

In point of fact, I happen to know from bitter personal experience that tact was not Za'ba's *forte*. And it makes me very sad to have to add that one crowning example of a lapse from rectitude and of the coercive power of paternal authority was when he divorced his first wife, the mother of his eldest daughter, Raihanah.

She was a widow with whom he had fallen passionately in love and his love was reciprocated by her with equal, if not even greater ardour.

She had already borne him a daughter when his father, Pak

Mat Kapar, decided that he should divorce her and marry a virgin girl. On hearing about this, Za'ba's wife went to seek Pak Mat Kapar and piteously and tearfully pleaded with him not to insist on the divorce. She told him that she was quite prepared to be left by Za'ba in the *kampung*, provided he did not divorce her.

The hard-hearted old man turned a deaf ear to her pleadings and ordered Za'ba to divorce her forthwith, otherwise he would disown him. Za'ba shamefully yielded to his father's behest and duly married his second wife.

Za'ba's younger brother, Haji Yusof, told me later that he visited his divorced sister-in-law not many months later and commiserated with her. He painted such a pathetic picture of a grieving woman, divorced by her husband through no fault of her own, that my heart was wrung with pity and compassion. It is clear that Za'ba's action in divorcing her was quite unpardonable, and cast a slur on his character, a man whom many of his admirers regarded as a paragon of virtue.

Haji Yusof has recently told me that three years before his death, Za'ba confessed to him that he regretted very much his rash act in divorcing his first wife and that in his then altered frame of mind he would never have obeyed his father's order, even at the risk of being disowned by him.

In any event, the woman he had so cruelly thrown aside, like an old rag, nobly yielded custody of their child Raihanah to Za'ba so that he was able to bring her up decently and to see to it that she was properly educated.

The young Raihanah got through her Senior Cambridge Examination and became a school teacher. She was happily married to Encik Mohamed, a technical assistant in the P.W.D. and bore him several children, all of whom have done and are doing very well in their school careers. Two of her children are now studying overseas at British universities.

I must say that, of all Za'ba's children, Raihanah is closest to me and that I have a great affection for her.

In contrast to his younger brother, Ibrahim, who was tall for a Malay, my uncle Mohamed was a short man. He was an assiduous reader of the three newspapers *Utusan Melayu, Lembaga Melayu* and *Pengasoh*, to which he contributed many articles and letters to the editor. Later in life he began to subscribe to Indonesian periodicals such as *Bintang Hindia*.

My uncle was a chain-smoker. The particular brand of cigarettes that he was partial to was the "Bicycle" brand in its yellow packets.

As he had made a name for himself as a newspaper contributor, the members of the Malay Teachers Association of Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Malacca elected him as editor of the *Majallah Guru*, the official organ of the association.

For several years he devoted himself to the task of nurturing this monthly magazine with the aim of making it a periodical of quality, and to this end he gathered round him such writers as Za'ba, his brother Mohd. Yusof, and Haji Mohamed Sidin who could be relied upon to contribute regularly articles of pith and substance. There can be do doubt that he achieved his aim and his reputation as a dedicated journalist was thereby placed on a firm foundation.

It is said that writers and editors of newspapers and magazines belong to the category designated the "genus irritable". My uncle Mohamed was no exception to the rule.

Although his temper was not so vitriolic as that of his younger brother, Ibrahim, his sedentary life, lack of exercise and his chain-smoking had the combined effect of making him an extremely irritable man.

My second cousin, Khalid, who as a pupil of St. Paul's Institution, Seremban, boarded with him at his teacher's quarters at Temiang, was the witness of an exhibition of extreme irritability by my uncle.

It happened that one day my uncle was busily occupied in editing the *Majallah Guru* and in the process had, of necessity, to correct the articles which had been sent to him for publication, delete undesirable and occasionally "subversive" sentences and generally lick them into shape.

While so occupied, a sudden gust of wind blew into his room and scattered the articles which my uncle was editing all over the room. He rose from his chair and in a fit of irritability shouted, "*Rentikan angin ni!*" ("Stop this wind!").

To me, however, my uncle Mohamed was always kindness itself. I remember as if it were yesterday an instance of his innate kindness to me.

About a week before one particular Hari Raya during my boyhood, I had visualised my uncle presenting a pocket watch to me.

The evening before Hari Raya Day, he returned to the ancestral home. He was lying down on the floor of the *tengah rumah* when suddenly he called me to his side and asked me to scratch his itchy back. After I had done so to his satisfaction, he fished out of his bag a "Tempus" watch, exactly as I had visualised a week before.

The only plausible explanation for this incident is that my longing to possess a pocket watch had been communicated to him by telepathy.

Soon after my circumcision wound was completely healed, my attention was drawn to an outcry coming from the direction of my uncle Mohamed's rubber smallholding, about a hundred yards distant from my house.

I ran to the place to find out what the hubbub was all about. There I saw the most shocking and shameful sight that I have ever seen in my life: it was nothing less than the spectacle of my second cousin, Aminah alias Kak Cho', the widow of Pak Kentol, the epileptic, enclosed in a sarong cheek by jowl with Abass, the Kampung Hilir bullock-cart driver. Milling round them were Safiah alias Kak Ketot, the younger sister of Aminah, her husband Cikgu Samad, my mother, aunt Khadijah and Kak Hendon, the wife of Haji Mat Amin, the Javanese.

They kept shouting at Abass, exhorting him to release Kak Cho' from her durance vile. Abass turned a deaf ear to their shouted appeals, stolidly saying that he wanted to marry her.

In the meantime as a result of the struggle of Kak Cho' to free herself the sarong had been gradually bunched up. Kak Hendon promptly seized the opportunity to cut the sarong with her parang, thus releasing Kak Cho' from her imprisonment. Baulked of his prey, Abass was forced to beat a precipitate retreat to Kampung Hilir.

Kak Cho' was then subjected to a severe grilling by my aunt, Khadijah, and Cikgu Samad and accused of having some intrigue with Abass. She answered that far from having indulged in an illicit love affair with Abass, she didn't know him from Adam.

It became obvious to her relatives that Abass must have seen her at a wedding or at some other *kampung* function and had fallen in love with her. As he probably guessed that his suit would be rejected by Kak Cho' and her relatives, in his desperation he decided to waylay her as she was on her way to her

house after having a bath at the well on the northern side of my uncle's rubber smallholding.

Once this sort of incident happened in a *kampung*, the woman's honour was inevitably compromised, for Mrs. Grundy was only too prone to think the worse of the couple involved in such a situation. To avoid further scandal, the woman's parents and relatives generally consented to their marriage, especially if they were genuinely in love with one another. In the case of Kak Cho', however, she swore that she wasn't in love with Abass and loathed the very idea of being forced to marry him.

Furthermore, as Kak Cho' was closely related to us, her mother being a first cousin of my mother's, and since Abass was of obscure parentage, a family council was therefore convened to which my uncle Ibrahim and my aunt Khadijah's husband, Dato' Laksamana Abdul Majid, were invited and their views solicited.

After due deliberation, it was decided that in order to prevent further scandal, a story should be concocted to the effect that, in waylaying Kak Cho' and lassoing her with a sarong, Abass was really attempting to rob her of her gold necklace.

A report to that effect was accordingly lodged at the Pengkalan Kempas police-station. The sergeant-in-charge consulted his superior officer, the O.C.P.D. at Port Dickson, who ordered the arrest of Abass.

He was, however, bailed out by Encik Mat, a *Jawi Pekan* petition-writer, the husband of Zainab, the elder sister of Abass.

My uncle Ibrahim took it upon himself to coach Kak Cho', my aunt Khadijah, Kak Hendon and Kak Ketot on what to say as witnesses for the prosecution at the subsequent trial.

In this trial which was held at Port Dickson about a month later, Encik Mat engaged a young Seremban lawyer, Mr. Earnest Jelf, to defend Abass. As for our side, so sure were we that Abass would be convicted and sent to prison, that it was not considered necessary to engage a lawyer.

In the course of the actual trial, the much-rehearsed evidence of the witnesses for the prosecution was torn to tatters by Mr. Jelf so that Abass was acquitted of the charge of robbery.

The reader may wonder why I am constantly wandering off the beaten tract and describing all sorts of people and events in my birthplace that appear to have no relation whatsoever to my autobiography.

In point of fact, I am deliberately doing so in order to give some idea of the environment that has shaped my ends in conjunction with my heredity.

For one thing, my training as a doctor, interested in the science of genetics as applied to man, has led me to modify somewhat Shakespeare's famous lines:

> There is a Divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will.

In place of the word Divinity, I would put the word Heredity and in addition stress the importance of Environment as an additional factor in the shaping of our ends.

....

It is true that the Malays have a lot of headway to make, but there is no justification for them to despair of ever achieving the goal that their political leaders have set for them, provided of course they are prepared to meet the challenges which the future has in store for them.

The time factor is of course very important. The Malays are a relatively young race compared to the Chinese and Indians with their more than four thousand years of civilization during which they have evolved to their present cultural, educational and economic superiority.

However, given the goodwill, understanding and sympathy of the two other races toward the Malays, there is no conceivable reason why their progress cannot be further accelerated. The present state of racial imbalance can finally be eliminated and a peaceful and united multiracial nation welded from its diverse elements.

I have described how my father worked so hard on Saturday afternoons and Sundays to develop the three acres of land he had inherited from his father.

By the time I was admitted to the Malay College, the rubber seeds he had sown had grown into tappable rubber trees and my mother began to derive a steady monthly income of at least two hundred dollars per mensem.

As my grandmother Siti Zaleha also owned a five-acre smallholding, which had been planted with the financial assistance of her two sons, Mohamed and Ibrahim, the income she obtained

from her smallholding also augmented the family budget.

My mother began to invest her money in a lot of jewellery. Like all Linggi women of those days, the first thing she thought of purchasing from the goldsmiths of Seremban was *kerosang paun* (gold brooches), consisting of three British sovereigns, gold coins worth £1, strung together with chains made of solid gold; she also bought gold rings, lockets and a chain for my sister Nur.

My aunt Khadijah and her husband Dato' Laksamana Abdul Majid, who by that time were living in their newly-built house about fifty yards distant from the ancestral home, also had their own five-acre smallholding and she, too, bought *kerosang paun*, gold rings and what-not from the goldsmiths.

Those were the days when *kampung* weddings were celebrated on a pretty lavish scale and when young women guests invariably wore a pair of *gelang kaki* (large gold anklets), gold chains-cum-lockets round their necks, gold bangles round their wrists, ruby rings on the third fingers of their left hands, silk *lok chuan baju labuh* and silk sarongs and expensive Trengganu *Empat Sekarap tudung linkup*.

The members of the Indian *chettiar* community of moneylenders in Seremban sometimes became beneficiaries of these lavish weddings, as it was not unusual for some silly parents to mortgage their rubber smallholdings to these rapacious people. Occasionally they lost their holdings altogether, as the *chettiars* invariably foreclosed should the mortgager default in payment of interest. Sometimes, while regularly paying the interest as well as the monthly instalments, the smallholders did not insist on getting the proper receipts, so that eventually they owed the moneylenders more than the sum actually loaned to them. In a word, they had been swindled.

Such was the shape of things in Linggi during the rubber boom in the second decade of the present century, and a merry time was had by all in the *kampung* not only in Linggi but in the rest of Negri Sembilan and Malaya as a whole.

Besides the comparatively new lure of rubber planting in Linggi, *atap*-making was a long-standing staple village industry in the district. *Atap* is made from the fronds of the nipah palm which grows in profusion in the marshy land on the left side of the road beyond Pengkalan Kempas.

In those days Linggi was famed for its *udang galah*, a variety of

large and very tasty prawns which the fishermen of Permatang Pasir used to catch in large numbers in the Linggi River. These prawns were in great demand by the *kampung* people and were so cheap that a *cucuk* of prawns could be bought for ten cents.

In the Linggi of those days there were many intrepid young men who took it in their stride to dive for oysters (*menyelam tiram*) near the mouth of the Linggi River. One of these young men was Yahya bin Abu, the youngest brother of my Aunt Rashidah's husband, Mohamad bin Abu, the first Linggi boy to be educated at the old Malay Residential School, the predecessor of the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar. Yahya naturally felt it incumbent upon himself to present some of his oysters to my grandmother, Siti Zaleha, as she was the mother of his sister-in-law, my aunt Rashidah.

As Muslims were not supposed to eat any flesh, fish or fowl, in the raw state, my mother cooked the oysters in a special way so as to produce a very delicious curry (*gulai*).

Another form of seashell that could be purchased for a song at Pengkalan Kempas was cockles (*kerang*). They were generally boiled to a turn after cleansing their shells with *senuduk* leaves.

Cockles are generally eaten with a mixture of Chinese ketchup and vinegar, or mixed with chilli powder, onion parings and coconut milk to form a delicious dish, or cooked in the form of a curry with ground chillis and *belacan*.

In whatever manner it was cooked, I became a "cockles addict" as a boy and even now that I am a septuagenarian, I am still very fond of eating cockles.

I have described how my third brother, Kassim, was adopted by my paternal aunt, Halimah, and her husband Mushaffak, and that he lived with my paternal grandmother, Cik Empok, and his adoptive parents.

My grandmother must have been nearly seventy years old when I used to visit her, my aunt Halimah, her husband, Mushaffak, and Kassim at their house, situated about a hundred yards distant from Leong's shop and the public road.

I loved my paternal grandmother very much, but I was not destined to enjoy her company very long. She died not many months after I had become a frequent visitor at her house. After her death, the house and the surrounding *kampung* land was left in the possession of my aunt and her husband, Mushaffak.

My aunt Halimah was an extremely pale woman of about

twenty-five and it was obvious, even to the young boy that I was, that she was a very sick person. With the hindsight of a doctor I now believe that the cause of her severe anaemia was an infestation with hook-worms.

My father bought for her treatment dozens of the cylindrical bottles containing Dr. William's pink pills. These iron-containing pills did not do her the slightest good, because the hook-worms in her intestines continued to multiply by the hundreds and thousands and to cling to her intestinal mucosa, sucking her very life-blood.

What she obviously needed was to be rid of her load of pernicious hook-worms before any attempt should be made to treat her anaemia.

It is sad to recall that my poor aunt Halimah died when my brother Kassim was five years old.

After her death, Kassim was brought back to the ancestral home by my mother to join me and my sister, Nur. Not many months later, his adoptive father, Mushaffak, alone in his bereavement, pined away, caught some kind of infection, and died of it.

Kassim at first appeared to miss his adoptive parents very much. He moped about disconsolately in the surrounding *kampung* for a few days until the love and affection we all lavished upon him consoled him. However, he never got round to the idea of calling me *Abang*, meaning brother, the usual word with which a younger brother always calls his elder brother. He had become accustomed to calling me Bang Nyet and my sister Cik Nur since his early childhood when he naturally thought he was the son of my aunt Halimah and her husband, Mushaffak.

As he grew older he, of course, realised that Nur and I were his true brother and sister, but by then the habit of calling me Bang Nyet and my sister Cik Nur had become so ingrained in him that he never made any attempt to change it.

Kassim was in some ways a strange boy. For instance, he generally preferred the company of my sister Nur and her girl friends and he had a favourite cockerel with which he was often seen to talk as though the cockerel could understand what he was saying. In saying that he preferred the company of girls, I am not suggesting that he was a precocious Don Juan or a latent transvestite. As far as the latter possibility was concerned, he never showed any predilection for the wearing of clothes of

the opposite sex.

I attribute his fondness for the company of girls to the fact that he had been so petted and pampered by his foster parents. He preferred the gentler ways of girls to the boisterous ones of boys.

Later, at the age of six, when he was admitted to the Linggi Malay School, he proved to be of above average intelligence and it was expected that he would do very well in his subsequent school career.

One very fine trait of his character was that he remained loyal to his friend and second cousin, Mohamad Taufik, the younger son of Ahmad bin Kapitan Ali, my mother's first cousin.*

A family dispute concerning the division of the property left by my granduncle Dato' Panglima Besar Haji Mohamed Bakir, Encik Ebon's father, caused a period of strained relations between my grandmother, mother and aunts on one side, and Encik Ebon Penghulu Nong's wife on the other. Kassim was forbidden by my mother to associate with Taufik or to pay him friendly visits at his house.

It happened that one night Kassim did not return, having been persuaded by Taufik to stay with him at the new house that Penghulu Nong had built near the Malay School.

Unfortunately that very night, a keg of gunpowder in the house mysteriously caught fire and the fire rapidly spread all over the house. In next to no time the whole house was burned down.

Karim, a Tamil employee of Penghulu Nong, whom he had succeeded in converting to Islam, was caught unawares and died of extensive third-degree burns. Another man, Yunus, the husband of Kak Bondeng, who happened to be visiting the Penghulu, suffered minor superficial burns. Penghulu Nong, Encik Ebon Yazid, Taufik and Abdullah escaped unhurt.

The third casualty was Kassim who suffered superficial burns on his trunk, upper and lower limbs. He was carried in a sort of hammock back to the ancestral home by a couple of men.

Mak Esah, the *dukun*, was immediately summoned to treat

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* i.e. the first headteacher in Linggi who was subsequently appointed Penghulu of the Mukim. He was generally known in Linggi and the neighbouring *kampung* by his nickname Nong, as Cikgu Nong and then as Penghulu Nong.

him. As it was already late at night when she arrived at the house, there was nothing much she could do other than mutter her inevitable incantations (*jampi*) and smear the affected parts of Kassim's body with betel-vine juice (*air sireh*).

On the next day, however, she brought with her several coils of a kind of jungle liana, the bark of which she proceeded to grind in a mortar until a portion of the liana had been reduced to a fine powder. She mixed the powder with water and she thoroughly smeared the burns on Kassim's body with the resulting emulsion.

The emulsion appeared to have a soothing effect on Kassim. On the next day, however, large blisters began to appear in the burnt areas. The blisters gradually burst open one by one and the inevitable infection of the underlying skin took place, with the result that pus exuded from the infected parts, and for about a week the room in which Kassim lay stank to high heaven.

My mother, however, assiduously nursed Kassim day and night and every morning washed off the pus with lukewarm water that had been put to the boil, so that after about a week, Kassim's burns began to show signs of healing. About ten days later the burns were completely healed and Kassim was soon up and about, very repentant because he had disobeyed my mother's injunction not to associate himself with his friend and second cousin, Mohamad Taufik.

The use of a species of jungle liana for the treatment of burns as prescribed by Mak Esah, is analogous to the old method of treatment by qualified doctors by the application of 2½ percent tannic acid to superficial burns of the kind that my brother Kassim suffered. I have no doubt in my mind that the emulsion of the jungle liana powder contained tannic acid, and as Kassim's burns were superficial ones, the use of the emulsion was therefore based on sound therapeutic principles.

The same observation may be extended to the use of *biji kani* emulsion in the case of *kampung* people suffering from sinusitis. I suffered from this infection in one of my nasal sinuses when I was eight years old.

As usual, my mother consulted *dukun* Mak Esah. She at first prepared several cigarettes composed of assorted herbs wrapped with dry dark-brown banana leaves and asked me to smoke a couple of these cigarettes daily.

After smoking these not unpleasant cigarettes for a week, no improvement was noticeable in my complaint and my nose continued to emit a foul-smelling discharge. Mak Esah was informed that her cigarettes had not done me any good.

She therefore asked my mother to buy some *biji kani* from the local shop and instructed her how to make an emulsion from it for me to inhale into my nasal cavities.

By meticulously following her advice, in about a week's time the foul discharge from my nose began to diminish and after a couple of weeks of further inhalation, I was at last cured of this unpleasant infection, which, on account of the stinking discharge exuding from my nose, made propinquity to me abhorrent to one and all except, of course, my mother and close relatives.

The two previously mentioned cases concerning a *kampung dukun*, and a female one at that, should be sufficient to convince the powers-that-be that the present move to recognise Chinese *sinsehs*, Indian Ayurvedic practitioners and Malay *dukuns*, *bomohs* and *pawangs* as legitimate practitioners of the healing arts is a sound one.

My gentle and ill-starred aunt Halimah, whose early death brought Kassim back to the ancestral home, was actually my father's youngest sister. He had an elder one, Khatijah, who was nicknamed Halus (Alus) and always so called. She had been married to Syed Mohammad, the younger brother of Sharifah Rogayah, my Koran teacher Wan Neng's mother and a cousin of my mother's. She had borne two children by him, the elder being a daughter generally called Sharifah Hijau, and the second, a son, Syed Ahmad.

Unfortunately Syed Mohammad died not many months after the birth of his son. Thus it was that when I came to know my aunt Halus and my two cousins, she was already a widow living with her two children in a house about fifty yards from my paternal grandmother's and very close to Leong's shop.

My aunt and her two children had a great affection for me, and whenever I visited my grandmother, they never failed to persuade me to stay with them after I had slept for a night at my grandmother's place.

My cousin Sharifah Hijau, besides being a beauty, was also a great tease and was forever teasing her brother Syed Ahmad, so that the two were constantly squabbling with one another. I

was, however, very much attached to them both, more especially to Sharifah Hijau whom I called *kakak*.

She was five years and Syed Ahmad three years older than I. The latter was a very clever boy whose subsequent school career at the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar, was quite outstanding.

I remember that he had successfully reared a *bebarau* fledgling which he had caught, to full maturity by feeding it with grasshoppers and all sorts of berries which this species of bulbul was known to like. He told me that he was going to teach it to talk, and when I asked him how he proposed to do so, he said he would first have to cut off the tip of its tongue with a gold knife and then only would it be able to learn to talk. I do not remember whether he eventually succeeded in teaching his beloved *bebarau* to talk. At that time I did not know that some species of birds could be trained to talk, so that I thought that my cousin was kidding me.

In the good old days, *kampung* weddings were regarded by adults and children as very important — and exciting — social events. They were the occasions when the men could freely display their skills in constructing the three-tiered *pelamin* or dais on which the bride and bridegroom were required to sit during the ceremony of *bersanding*, and the bride alone to sit like a glorified idol on the two nights devoted to the *berhinai kecil* and *berhinai besar* ceremonies.

The superstructure constructed over the three-tiered *pelamin* was always made of the slender trunks of the *bertam* palm tree growing wild in the jungle, and papers of various colours were used. They were cut into strips about 1½ inches wide and wound round the pillars of the *pelamin*. Designs were traced on them in the manner of wood carvings and artistically cut out to conform to the designs.

They were then hung round the front and sides of the *pelamin*, while its back part was decorated in a different way so as to enhance the beauty of the finished work.

A *pelamin* generally took a couple of weeks or more to complete, as the unpaid voluntary work of making it was done at night time and the various designers and helpers apparently dawdled over the work in order to prolong their nightly enjoyment of the *tambul* in the form of *bubur kacang*, coffee-cum-*goreng pisang* or *roti canai* provided *gratis* by the bride's parents.

The boys, including myself, were interested spectators at

these nightly sessions of *pelamin*-making and joyfully joined our elders in partaking of the mouth-watering *tambul* always provided on these occasions.

The *pelamin* was generally considered a must at the bride's house but not at the bridegroom's, just as the *kenduri* held on the day of the *bersanding* was on a much more lavish scale at the bride's house than at the bridegroom's.

Consequently the outlay for the wedding of a daughter was much greater than what the parents of a bridegroom were obliged to spend, unless of course the bride's parents were to insist on exacting an exorbitant sum of money in the form of *belanja kahwin*, a veiled form of bride price, in addition to expensive presents from the bridegroom. The *mas kahwin* which is the legal sum which the bridegroom has to pay is generally a nominal sum of forty-eight dollars in the case of members of the *waris* group and forty dollars for the non-*waris* in Linggi.

I remember an instance in Linggi in which a foolish father had to mortgage his rubber smallholding to a Seremban *chettiar* in order to defray the expenses of his daughter's wedding. As he fell behind in his payment of the monthly interest on his loans, as well as on the required monthly instalments, the *chettiar* had no compunction in foreclosing the mortgage.

A wedding in those days generally began with the ceremony of the *berhinai kecil*. The *tukang andam* took over the task of dressing up the bride in the reddish *baju labuh* and sarong of the *songket* variety.

Her hair was coiffured in the form of the *sanggul lintang* and stuck full of *cucuk sanggul;* long flexible hairpins with flowered tips which shook and swayed with every movement of the bride's head. Her neck was festooned with several heavy, gold *dokohs* or pendants, her face thickly powdered with *bedak* and her lips smeared with Chinese paper lipstick known as *pantis*.

Her sarong was fastened to her waist by a gold buckle known as *pending* with a belt of the same material.

Thus togged up, the bride, whose eyes must be closed all the time, was led by the *tukang andam* to the *pelamin* and made to sit on the dais with the palms of both hands uppermost, while one female relative after another took her turn to put wet ground henna in the middle of each palm and around all her fingertips.

The preliminary ceremony of *berhinai kecil* generally lasted less than an hour, after which the bride was led back to the bri-

dal chamber, where she was promptly divested of her extremely uncomfortable wedding apparel and was permitted to wear ordinary clothes and where at last she could open her eyes.

The bridal chamber had been so well and so expensively decorated that wedding guests were invited to view the multi-coloured *tabir* which draped its four walls, the beautifully-made iron bedstead with its gilt railings, the gorgeous yellow or pink silken mosquito-net with its ornamental hangings and, last but by no means least, the specially-made pillows and bolsters with their gold *muka bantal*.

On the following night the ceremony of *berhinai besar* was held. This involved the attendance of the bridegroom as well as the bride. Attired in a pair of *seluar* and a brownish-red *jubah* and wearing a special kind of headgear, he was led to the bride's house by a small number of his closest relatives and a similar number of young men who drummed him to the bride's house with their *rebana* to the accompaniment of loudly voiced, albeit mispronounced, Arabic songs.

Having arrived at the bride's house, he was led to the dais by his best man, usually a close friend. The bride was already seated on the dais with her eyes closed, but as the bridegroom or *Raja Sehari* he had the privilege of keeping his eyes solemnly open.

In most cases, that very night was the first time he had the opportunity of taking a fleeting glance at his future wife, as it was the custom in the Linggi of my boyhood to segregate Malay girls at about the age of twelve from boys of the same age or older ones. This custom was termed *pingit* in those days.

Unlike the previous night, when only the bride's parents and close relatives had the privilege of applying the henna on the bride's palm and fingertips, on the night of the *berhinai besar*, the people so privileged included close relatives of the bridegroom. And they not only had to apply it to the bride's palm and fingertips but to the groom's as well.

In the rest of Negri Sembilan where the people are of Minangkabau descent, a dance called *tari piring* was performed by young girls after the henna-staining ceremony was concluded. In Linggi no such dance was ever performed.

The bride had to wait for the bridegroom's arrival on the *pelamin* for at least an hour, after which she and her husband-to-be had to submit to the henna-staining ritual by a greater

number of people. That and the fact that the number of spectators filling the *tengah rumah* was greater than on the previous night, rendering the room hot and humid, made the night of the *berhinai besar* an ordeal to be stoically borne by the bride, and a mercy it was when the doings were all over and the people dispersed to their homes.

The culmination of the wedding, however, took place on the third day. In the afternoon the *akad nikah*, that is, the religious service, was carried out at the bride's house.

The bridegroom on this occasion was dressed in silk *baju* and *seluar* and wore a *kain-samping* woven in Trengganu or Kelantan. As headgear he generally wore a *songkok*.

He was accompanied to the bride's house by a number of his relatives, bearing trays containing the customary presents from the bridegroom to the bride. These presents generally consisted of a diamond ring, a pair of lady's shoes or embroidered slippers, a *baju* and sarong made of silk or of the *songket* variety. One of the trays contained the *mas kahwin*.

In addition to the nominal sum which constitutes the *mas kahwin* from the bridegroom, it was and still is customary for the bridegroom to give the bride a present of money ranging from five hundred to one thousand dollars or more, depending upon the social status of the bride's family and the bridegroom's ability to afford the sum demanded by the bride's parents.

The mas kahwin and the present of money were generally in the form of ten-dollar notes artistically folded up in diverse ways and intermingled with *sireh* leaves similarly arranged on the tray. Another tray contained the inevitable *bunga rampai* composed of finely chopped-up and scented *pandan* leaves.

Having arrived at the *serambi* of the bride's house, the bride's relatives welcomed the bridegroom, and his accompanying relatives.

While presenting the *mas kahwin* and the money present, the bridegroom's uncle uttered a set formula couched in the politest language. The bride's uncle, having responded in similar fashion, proceeded to count the *mas kahwin* and the money present with the aid of one or two other relatives.

Having satisfied himself that the two sums of money fulfilled the requirement of the *adat*, he indicated that the actual *akad nikah* or marriage service could then proceed.

Islam requires that the actual function of addressing the bridegroom to the effect that he was being united in holy matrimony to the bride should be carried out by the bride's father, but in Linggi this chore was always delegated by him either to the *imam* or the *kadi*.

In any case before either the bride's father or the *imam/kadi* did so, it was the latter who read out from a book the Arabic marriage service and afterwards instructed the bridegroom on his duties as a husband, exhorted him to avoid certain pitfalls that might jeopardise his marriage and warned him of certain penalties that might be imposed upon him should he betray the trust laid upon him by the bride and her parents in accordance with the strict laws of Islam.

After the *akad nikah* had been concluded and the prayer beseeching Allah to bless the marriage had been intoned by the *imam/kadi*, all present at the ceremony were treated to tea and cakes.

At about 5.00 p.m. that evening, the bridegroom was dressed up in a reddish-brown *jubah*, *seluar* and a headgear more resembling a truncated tarboosh than a *songkok* and with several feet of silk cloth wound tightly round it. He was then drummed to the bride's house by a much larger company of young as well as older men, beating their *rebana* in unison, thereby creating a veritable din to the accompaniment of mispronounced Arabic *zikir* sung at the top of their voices.

The crowd of relatives and invited guests accompanying the groom generally numbered more than a hundred in all. Men and women alike were dressed in their holiday best and everyone wore a cheerful expression on his or her face.

Young newly-married women wore *tudung lingkup*, *kerosang paun*, *gelang kaki*, ruby or diamond rings and slippers, the toe caps of which were embroidered with *kelengkan*.

Young unmarried men on this memorable day caught glimpses of beautiful faces half-hidden behind the *tudung lingkup*, which Linggi young women of those days wore long before the modern *selendang* came into fashion.

The tudung lingkup consisted of a fine coloured, hand-woven silk sarong worn round the upper part of the body and over the head, half concealing the face but enabling the wearer to have an unimpeded view of everyone and everything within range of her vision.

As the bridegroom and his party approached the bride's house, the *rebana* beaters-cum-singers grew more and more excited and the tempo of the music became faster and faster and the songs grew louder and louder.

By the time they had arrived at the front courtyard of the bride's house, the *rebana* players and singers were almost frantic with excitement. The large number of *anak-anak dara* (virgin girls) who had been invited to the bride's house and had gone upstairs to the *peran* began to lift up a portion of the *atap* roof in order to peep at the spectacle in the courtyard below, particularly at the young *rebana* beaters.

A middle-aged, female member of the bride's family would then come down the stairs of the *serambi* part of the house in order to welcome the bridegroom by scattering uncooked, saffroned rice grains or *bertih* on the tasselled umbrella held over the bridegroom's head and on the bridegroom's person.

Then two or three pairs of experts in the ceremonial form of the *silat* would take turns to display their skill and grace in front of the bridegroom and to show off to several pretty married women and widows who happened to witness their performance.

After the *silat* display was over, the bridegroom would be conducted upstairs by his best man, generally a close friend, and led to the *tengah rumah* where he had to sit on the *pelamin*, side by side with the bride.

By that time the *tengah rumah* was already overcrowded with members of the bride's and bridegroom's families (who were generally given the place of pride right in front of the *pelamin*) as well as invited guests and sundry gate-crashers, so that the atmosphere became oppressive with exhaled carbon dioxide and fetid with body odours.

The next item on the programme would be the ceremony of the *tepung tawar*. This consisted of the sprinkling of an emulsion of rice flour on the hands of both the bride and bridegroom, followed by the scattering of *bertih* or saffroned rice grains on them, and finishing with the sprinkling of *air mawar* on them.

The local chief and his wife were generally invited to start the ball rolling, after which it was the turn of the bridegroom's close relatives to follow suit and then that of the bride's parents and close relatives. It should be noted that it was not then the custom for the bridegroom's parents to accompany their son to the

bride's place.

After the *tepung tawar* ceremony was over, it was the custom for the *tukang andam* to take a lump of saffroned *pulut* rice from the mound of *nasi kunyit*, stuck-full of *telur merah*, which was placed on a tray in front of the *pelamin*. She would give the lump to the bridegroom, and make him "feed" the bride and then repeat the same process with the bride, who, in her turn, had to perform this mock-feeding of *pulut* rice to the bridegroom.

After the mock-feeding ritual was over, at a signal from his best man, the bridegroom rose up on the dais and stepped down from it. He waited for the bride to do the same, whereupon the *tukang andam* linked the forefinger of the bride to that of the bridegroom, who then slowly and sedately led the bride to the beautifully-decorated bridal chamber.

There a tray containing very special dishes awaited the newly-wedded pair. Two or three local celebrities, such as the local chief, the headteacher of the Malay School, the *penghulu* and the local *imam* or *kadi* were invited to partake of the food. While the guests were free to eat as much of the rice and specially prepared dishes as their appetites urged them to, it was generally considered bad form for the bridegroom and the bride to eat more than a wee bit of the rice and other food.

The guests having left, the *tukang andam* began to divest the bride of her most uncomfortable *songket baju* and sarong, and to unstick the numerous *cucuk sanggul* in her hair, while behind a curtain the bridegroom changed into ordinary *baju*, sarong and *songkok*. As it was bad form for him to linger in the bridal chamber, he generally went out to the *serambi* to greet his friends and other guests.

In those days the bride had to sit on the dais for more than an hour, waiting for the arrival of the bridegroom, in a bridal attire which was very uncomfortable, with her chest weighted down by two or three rows of heavy *dokoh* which prevented her from breathing properly. In these circumstances and in the suffocating atmosphere of the *tepung tawar* ceremony, it was not uncommon for her to drop to the floor in a dead faint before the bridegroom had succeeded in leading her to the bridal chamber.

It was the practice then for the *tukang andam* to rapidly divest her of her bridal attire and remove the heavy pendants from her neck. The *dukun* was then generally called to exorcise the *hantu* or evil spirits which were supposed to have caused her fainting

fit. After muttering her incantations, the *dukun* generally diagnosed her fainting fit as due to the *hantu* or *pelesit* which the bridegroom's rival for her love had invoked with the help of another *dukun* or *pawang* to cause her fainting. For several days afterwards, the *dukun* continued to mutter her incantations in order to exorcise the evil spirits from her patient.

Her fainting fit was probably caused by her fear of the unknown of newly-wedded life and the suffocating atmosphere attendant upon the *bersanding* ceremony, and she was invariably cured of her fainting fit and subsequent languor in a few days. In one instance, however, I remember that the *dukun* indiscreetly mentioned the name of his supposed rival to the bridegroom. He, therefore, suspected his wife of a previous liaison with the rival and for this reason refused to consummate the marriage. He left his wife in dudgeon and later actually divorced her.

This actually happened in the case of the marriage of my cousin, Long Shamah, to our cousin, Alias bin Abdul Jalil, and I was a witness to the fainting fit, the ministrations of the *dukun* and the infamous behaviour of Alias in abandoning Long Shamah after one of the most lavish weddings in Linggi.

Such a case of indiscretion on the part of the *dukun* was extremely rare and as a general rule the marriage fared as other marriages generally do in Linggi, seldom ending in divorce, as frequently happened in the rest of Negri Sembilan where the matriarchal *Adat Perpateh* prevails.

While the various doings described above took place at the *tengah rumah*, the large number of guests comprising the inhabitants of the whole *kampung* were being entertained at a *kenduri* at the *serambi* of the house and at a make-shift *penanggah* which had been constructed by the side of the house. It was usual for a buffalo or large bull to be slaughtered for the occasion, supplemented with a large number of chickens and several goats, especially if the bride's parents were among the well-to-do *kampung* elite. The guests were generally entertained with *nasi minyak* and buffalo meat or beef curries supplemented with chicken or goat meat *korma*, vegetable dishes, and cucumber and pineapple salads. Black coffee and bananas were served as dessert and at the conclusion of the dinner every guest was presented with a red egg in a fancy wrapping.

Then many of these guests made a bee-line for the *tengah rumah* in order to feast their eyes not only on the bridal pair on

the dais but on any other women of their fancy, especially if they happened to be beautiful young widows or divorcees. As the room was already overcrowded, there was generally some jostling and nudging among those who were most eager to gain entry. Quite a few of the young girls who had stationed themselves in the *peran* or loft of the house were unconventional enough to stand on the stairs leading to it, ostensibly to gaze at the bride and bridegroom, but in reality to steal a look at any eligible young men among the spectators.

The bridegroom, having joined his friends and other guests on the verandah, there ensued a night-long session of what is known as *berzikir*, which means the chanting of certain Arabic songs of a religious nature to the accompaniment of the rhythmic beating of the *rebana*. As it was generally practised on the night of the *bersanding* there was nothing especially religious about this chanting, as the Arabic language was generally massacred, and there was an atmosphere of merriment, if not revelry, about the whole proceeding, for was it not an occasion for rejoicing rather than solemnity in thus celebrating the wedding of a friend?

Needless to say refreshments in the form of *bubur kacang*, *roti canai*, coffee and cakes were served at intervals to the guests. The bridegroom ate without inhibition among his young friends, having eaten only a morsel of food in the bridal chamber.

The chanting of *zikirs* with their rhythmic *rebana* accompaniments generally ended at dawn, when a breakfast of *roti canai*, beef curry and steaming hot coffee was served to everyone. And then, amidst much bantering and bandying of jokes by his friends to the effect that he was at last free to seek the delectable company of his new wife, they bade him goodbye and he returned to the bridal chamber to make the acquaintance of his bashful bride.

The bride and bridegroom having rested for several hours, were only partially recovered from the ordeal of the *bersanding* ceremony, when, in the late afternoon of the following day, the *mandi sampat* ceremony was performed in the open air.

For this purpose, a platform was constructed by the side of the bride's house. The bride and bridegroom dressed in ordinary *baju* and sarong were conducted to the platform where they had to submit themselves to a ceremonial lustration with water

until they were thoroughly drenched.

However, the interesting and exciting thing about the *mandi sampat*, and part and parcel of the whole proceeding, was the customary participation of guests and spectators who indulged in a free-for-all fun and frolic, which took the form of squirting one another with water contained in several large jars (*tempayans*). These large jars had been filled to the brim beforehand.

This they did either with ordinary dippers, or with *sumpitans* or squirters made of lengths of bamboo and plungers. However well-dressed their fellow guests might be, they were practically never spared and the victims generally responded by deluging their opponents in like manner.

Needless to say, we boys participated fully in the fun and always came to a *mandi sampat* armed with bamboo squirters.

In the late afternoon of the following day, it was the custom for the bride to be formally presented to her parents-in-law and pay her respects to them.

She was again togged up in her bridal dress, but because she had to walk to the house of her parents-in-law, on this day her chest was not oppressed by the heavy gold pendants which she had to wear at the *bersanding*, nor was her hair stuck so full of *cucuk sanggul*. Furthermore, she was not obliged to walk with her eyes closed, especially as she generally had to put on slippers with beautifully embroidered toe-caps to which she was quite unaccustomed.

She was accompanied by her husband and a retinue of her close relatives. It was not, however, the custom for her parents to accompany her. A low table on which were placed saucers containing several varieties of traditional Malay cakes was slung on a pole or *kandar* stick which two men carried on their right shoulders.

Having arrived at her parents-in-law's house, she was welcomed with the traditional shower of uncooked, saffroned rice grains on her person. She was then led upstairs, where both she and her husband had to bow and kiss the hands (*sembah*) of her parents-in-law and those of her husband's close relatives and prominent guests. It was customary then for all to be entertained with tea and cakes. Afterwards, it was the custom for invited guests as well as close relatives of both the bride and bridegroom to deposit presents of money in a tray specially provided for the purpose. Generally these presents amounted to

not more than a dollar or two given by each person.

At the conclusion of the *menyalang*, the bride and bridegroom again performed the *sembah* to the parents of the bridegroom and his close relatives and shook hands with the invited guests, and having done so, wended their way back to the bride's house to begin their lives as a newly-married couple.

I have described a Malay *kampung* wedding in Linggi during the second decade of the present country at considerable length in order to give the reader an idea of how different this important social event was compared to present-day Malay weddings.

The reader may wonder how it was possible for a *kampung* Malay to get his daughter married on such an apparently lavish scale. It must be remembered that in the second decade of the twentieth century the average *kampung* Malay usually owned two or three acres of tappable rubber and the price of a pound of rubber then was more than two dollars and at one time rose to the astronomical sum of 12s.6d. per pound on the London market.* The owner of a smallholding of two or three acres could therefore be assured of an income of two to three hundred dollars per mensem.

Furthermore, the cost of living was then so low that a dollar was the price of four *gantangs* of imported rice and those in possession of one or two acres of *sawah* didn't have to buy imported rice at all.

The practice of *kampung* dwellers voluntarily giving a helping hand (*gotong-royong*) had the effect of further reducing the expenditure incurred by the parents of both the bride and bridegroom.

I have in fact just described the wedding of Cik Wok binti Mohamed Fathullah, the half-sister of Abdul Kuddus, one of my playmates. As the house in which they lived was only a few yards across the fence from my house, I was an interested spectator of all the doings in the bride's house from the very day the *pelamin* began to be constructed right to the last day of the *menyalang* ceremony.

The bridegroom, Mohd. Salleh bin Abdul Hadi, was a cousin

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* I have derived this information from a Ph.D. thesis entitled "A Social History of the British in Malaya 1880-1941" submitted to the University of Hull by J.G. Butcher, a copy of which was very kindly presented to me by the author.

of my father's, and an Old Boy of St. Paul's Institution, Seremban who was employed as a draughtsman in the Survey Department at Seremban.

As rural electrification was undreamed of in those days, the only form of lighting available was oil lamps in the house and many bamboo lamps (*pelita buluh*) erected in the compound to brighten the place and confer upon it a semblance of gaiety.

My playmates and I, therefore, took the opportunity to play all sorts of games in the compound while waiting for the *berhinai kecil* and the *berhinai besar* to take place. In fact, these games that we could play at night in the brightly-lit compound of the bride's house were regarded by us as a source of great pleasure and delight.

I have described how one result of my father's attempt to teach me the *jus amma* at the early age of three-and-a-half was that, on my admission to the Linggi Malay School, I soon had no difficulty in recognising the letters of the Arabic alphabet with which *Jawi* words are spelt, so that in no time at all I learnt to read *Jawi* with ease. As my grandmother Siti Zaleha, my mother and my two aunts were all avid readers of *hikayat* and *syair*, many of what Sri Delima has described as "those torrid old romances" were there for me to read.

I took to reading these torrid old *hikayat* and *syair* like a duck to water. I was particularly enchanted with the Malay translation of the Persian "Romance of the Rose" called *Gul Bakawali* which I remember reading by the flickering light of a kerosene lamp until well past midnight. Some of these *hikayat*, such as *Hikayat Kamarulzaman dengan Tuan Puteri Badrul-budur*, which I believe is a translation of one of the tales of *The Arabian Nights*, are even more erotic than *Hikayat Gul Bakawali*, but this early finding of mine did not prevent me from gloating over these romances.

Another *hikayat* that fascinated me was *Hikayat Bustaman*. My first introduction to this wonderful romance was wholly fortuitous: while on a visit to Mohamed Fathullah, alias Alang Temek, the father of my playmate Abdul Kuddus, I noticed several yellowing pages of this *hikayat* scattered about in his bedroom.

On inquiring from him what had happened to the rest of the pages, he said they had been borrowed by various people and had never been returned to him. And then he proceeded to tell me the story of Bustaman and of his love for Sri Maharaja Puteri

and of Bustaman's alter ego Johar's love for Siti Rakna Mala; of the two gigantic brothers Dandan Bakhtiar and Dandan Saujana; of Brahanan Jogni and of the old couple, Nenek Dahdi and Nenek Soama and so on and so forth.

The spellbinding manner in which the story was told by Alang Temek had the effect of exciting in me an intense craving for reading *Hikayat Bustaman*.

It was therefore a godsend to me when one day my aunt Khadijah showed me a beautifully hand-written copy of this *hikayat* which she had, with the greatest difficulty, succeeded in borrowing from Sharifah Rogayah, the mother of my Koran-reading teachers, Wan Teh and Wan Neng.

After having read the romance, she gave it to me to read. Imagine my delight when at last I was able to read it from cover to cover. The delicate manner in which the hero Bustaman dallied with his *inamorata,* Sri Maharaja Puteri, aided and abetted by Johar, who, in his own way, was enamoured of Siti Rakna Mala, the wise, witty and resourceful companion of Sri Maharaja Puteri, enchanted my boyish mind and heart. In so far as I can recollect, more than sixty years since I read this long romance, the beauty of the Princess was not explicitly described as in most Malay romances. Nevertheless I visualised her as a beautiful young princess, like Juliet, still in her teens, and in her immaturity very much dependent upon her companion, the older and wiser Siti Rakna Mala, to see to it that the course of her true love did run smooth.

When in the early forties I read the late Pendita Za'ba's "Modern Developments of Malay Literature" which was published as an addendum to Sir Richard's Winstedt's "A History of Classical Malay Literature" in the *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society,* I was surprised and disappointed to read in the very first sentence of his otherwise very informative article the phrase "the old tradition of supernatural romance".

It seemed to me then, as it still does now, that there is an unmistakeable tone of critical contempt directed at these old romances.

It is true that in *Hikayat Bustaman,* the two brothers, Dandan Bakhtiar and Dandan Saujana are described as veritable ogres, both of whom are bent upon taking Sri Maharaja Puteri to wife and in the process, killing Bustaman.

It is also true that Bustaman had learnt all kinds of the magical arts from Brahman Jogni and that the *jembia* he had stolen from the Brahman possessed such wonderful magical properties that it was made easy for him to kill the two Dandan brothers.

Be that as it may, Pendita Za'ba should never have characterised these old *hikayat* in the way he did. He might just as well have described Homer's great epic poems, *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, and also two Sanscrit epics, *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana*, as supernatural epics.

In this connection, I was glad to read in the *New Straits Times* of 2 February 1979, Sri Delima's article entitled "Those Torrid Old Romances" in the series "As I was Passing". In this article she stated that as a teenager of fifteen, she had become addicted to reading the old *hikayat*, in some of which there were portions which should have been expurgated as was done in an earlier version of *Lady Chatterly's Lover* before the monumental decision of the United States District Court rendered, on December 6, 1933, by Hon. Justice John N. Wooley, lifting the ban on James Joyce's novel, *Ulysses*, permitting its free publication and sale to the public, which led to the publication of the unexpurgated version of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover* and Henry Miller's much more explicitly erotic—pornographic—novels.

It is significant that Sri Delima did not describe these "torrid old romances" as supernatural, and it is probable that she did read many romances of this genre. As the creative writer that she intrinsically is, and endowed with her inimitable literary style, I am sure she shares my view that these old *hikayat* and *syair* should not be sneered at.

In point of fact, I consider *Hikayat Bustaman* one of my favourite romances. In it there is at least a distinct, if transient attempt at depicting people as they really are in real life, as evidenced in the constant bantering talk between Nenek Dahdi and his cantankerous old wife, Nenek Saoma and the portrait painted of Siti Rakna Mala as a wise, witty and resourceful young lady, who filled the triple role of companion to Sri Maharaja Puteri, *inamorata* of Johar and the go-between of Bustaman and Sri Maharaja Puteri.

This carping and contemptuous criticism of the so-called "supernatural romances" was not the only instance of Za'ba's seeming contempt for the works of other people, who were either

translators of Persian or Hindustani *hikayat* and *syair* or original writers.

Elsewhere in his *Modern Development of Malay Literature*, he says:

> To the same era belongs a mass of anonymous *syair* of third-rate quality. They must have been written by amateur poetasters for bookselling and lithographing firms in Singapore to keep the book trade alive. Typical are the *Syair Siral-al-Kiamat*, describing the horrors of Judgement Day, *Syair Siti Zabedah*, an epic of the wars of one Sultan Zainal Abidin of Kembayat and his beautiful bride, Siti Zabedah, with the seven princesses of China, and *Syair Dandan Setia*, a poem imitating the old Hindu romance. The date changes with every new reprint or edition. The *Syair Siti Zabedah* was lithographed at least thirty years ago, but the latest and abbreviated edition is dated 1924.

Incidentally the extent of Za'ba's contempt for these *syair* can be gauged by his use of the word "amateur" to qualify the word "poetaster". The latter word in itself means a petty or paltry poet. When it is qualified by the word "amateur", it can only means one who is not a poet at all.

Not having read *Syair Sirat-al-Kiamat* I am unable to give my opinion as to whether it was written by an "amateur poetaster" as the late Pendita Za'ba so contemptuously asserted, but in the days of my nonage I have read and re-read *Syair Siti Zabedah* several times and I do not agree that it is a *syair* of "third-rate quality", nor that it is the original work of an "amateur poetaster". I believe that it is a work of Indian origin translated into Malay in the form of a *syair*. The very word "Kembayat" is suggestive of the Gulf of Cambay in western India to the north of the port-city of Bombay and that was probably where Kembayat Negara was situated.

As for the *syair* itself, it is written in the conventional manner in which all classical Malay *syair* were written so that it is quite unjustifiable to characterise it as of "third-rate quality". Besides, in a biography of Za'ba entitled *Pendita Za'ba dalam Kenangan* by Abdullah Hussain and Khalid Hussain published in 1974, the co-authors state that the young Za'ba shed tears when he read *Syair Siti Zabedah*. If what the authors aver is true, it testifies to the fact that this *syair* evoked the tears of a young boy who later in his life dismissed it as a *syair* of "third-rate quality".

If one were to blindly adopt Za'ba's critical dictum, then

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and other poems written in quaint, medieval English must be dismissed as the poems of an "amateur poetaster", despite of the unanimous verdict of more perceptive literary critics who place Chaucer in the company of England's great poets.

And to cap it all, in his extremely censorious criticism of writers who were alumni of the two Malay Training Colleges of Malacca and Matang, he went on to assert that, among them, practically "none have come to be writers of any standing".

With due respect to the shade of the late Pendita Za'ba, I consider this verdict of his altogether unjust. He has overlooked the claims of the man who taught him to read and write romanised Malay in Jempol and in whose Government quarters he boarded later as a pupil of St. Paul's Institution, Seremban, to be a writer of at least some standing.

I am referring to my uncle, Mohamed bin Dato' Muda Haji Mohd. Peral, an alumnus of the Malay Training College, Malacca, who, after having served as an assistant teacher at the Malay School, Kuala Jempol and other Malay schools in Negri Sembilan, was eventually promoted to the position of headteacher at the Malay School, Temiang, Seremban.

Besides being an avid reader of *hikayat, syair* and religious tracts, he was a regular subscriber to the *Utusan Melayu* and later to the *Lembaga Melayu* and *Pengasoh* as well. Later still he began to take an interest in Indonesian monthly periodicals, such as the *Bintang Hindia* to which he subscribed. He also began to buy modern Indonesian novels, such as *Siti Norbaya*.

In the pages of the Malay newspapers mentioned above, his articles were quite often published, usually in the form of letters in the correspondence columns. Those were the days when the *halal-haram* controversy raged furiously in the correspondence columns of the three newspapers. Discussions on the subject of Malay poverty, its causes and cures, were freely aired in Malay newspapers, usually written by writers using pseudonyms for fear of their identities being known by the powers-that-be.

My uncle's ability as a teacher was recognised and he was selected for the post of assistant master at the Malay Teachers Training College at Matang, Perak, under Mr. A. Keir, the principal of that college. During the third year of his service at Matang he had recurrent attacks of what was probably benign tertian malaria. At his request, he was transferred back to Negri

Sembilan and assumed his former post of headteacher of Temiang Malay School.

He was in due course promoted as a group teacher for the district of Seremban. It was while holding this post that he was induced to be the first editor of the monthly magazine *Majallah Guru*, the organ of the Malay Teachers Associations of Negri Sembilan, Selangor and Malacca.

While the late Pendita Za'ba was undoubtedly the most prolific contributor to the *Majallah Guru*, my uncle, besides writing the editorials, also contributed articles on the history of Malay newspapers published in Malaya and also that of leading newspapers published in England, America, Australia and Japan, which he later published as a book called *Tawarikh Surat Khabar*. This book covered 235 pages of Jawi print.

Another book that he wrote was *Tawarikh Ulama Islam* which consists of short biographies of the *Imam* of the four orthodox sects of Islam and many other Muslim divines, together with an exposition of their teachings.

These two books, which may be described as the products of original research, testify at least to his great interest in the history of journalism and that of the great religious thinkers of Islam, and to his ability to express himself in a manner worthy of a writer of at least some standing.

In this connection, Professor Khoo Kay Kim and Ramlah Adam, in their article, "The Malacca College" published in the *New Straits Times Annual, 1977* have proved themselves to be much more perceptive and much juster literary critics than the late Pendita Za'ba.

The article cites Ahmad Abdullah alias Ahmad Bakhtiar as "perhaps the most productive literary figure among the alumni of the Malacca Teachers Training College".

The authors go on to say that Ahmad Bakhtiar had almost an obsessive love for history and therefore wrote numerous historical novels, practically all of which centred around the Malacca Sultanate: *Darah Melaka, Keris Melaka, Korban Keris Melaka, Falsafah Hang Tuah, Melaka Takkan Hilang, Hujan Darah di Selat Melaka, Perisura Bentan,* and *Puteri Gunung Ledang*.

Of my uncle, Mohamed bin Dato' Muda, the authors state that he wrote *Ghanai Bachaan*, a textbook for Malay schools, as well as a couple of books for popular reading.

Other alumni of the Malacca Training College were Haji

Mohamed Yusof, younger brother of Pendita Za'ba, who, besides contributing numerous articles on social and educational subjects to the *Majallah Guru* (using such pen-names as Jentayu, etc.) and to the newspapers *Lembaga*, *Majlis*, and *Utusan Zaman*, was more of a creative writer than Za'ba, as he wrote no less than seven novels which were serialised in the *Majallah Guru*. I remember that one of these short novels had for its heroine a courtesan after the manner of the famous novel *La Dame aux Camelias* by Alexander Dumas *fils*.

Haji Yusof was also the author of one of the most beautiful poems in the Malay language. I beg the reader's indulgence for presuming to quote it below:

Menungan Hidup

Apa tertulis di awan biru,
Di bunga di daun segenap penjuru;
Apa dinyanyikan oleh pohon ru,
Di tepi laut sayup menderu?

Ombak menyeru apa bendanya,
Guruh yang sayu apakah halnya;
Bayu berpuput kemana halanya,
Burung berbunyi apa katanya?

Apakah sebab gunung yang tinggi,
Fajar menyinsing ketika pagi;
Tanjung dan pulau, kolam perigi
Sudah dipandang dipandang lagi?

Apakah sebab bulan dan bintang,
Kilat memancar, pelangi merentang;
Sinaran syams pagi dan petang,
Sudah dilihat lagi ditentang?

Apakah sebab kasih tercinta,
menyusahkan hati melemahkan anggota;
Hiba termenung merasa leta,
Sudah ditanggung lagi dicinta?

The other writers of standing cited by the authors are Tuan Haji Mohamed Sidin and Abdul Hadi bin Hassan. Of the former it is stated that he wrote often in the *Majallah Guru* as well as in contemporary Malay newspapers such as *Majlis*, *Lembaga Melayu*, *Utusan Melayu*, and *Saudara*. He also contributed significantly towards the textbooks for Malay schools; he wrote

Geography Tanah Melayu, Syair Ta'siah, Kitab A B C bagi Murid-Murid Darjah Rendah, Sekolah Melayu Selangor, Buku Asal Usul Alam Melayu, Buku Budaya, Buku Sejarah Negri-negri Melayu and *Buku Adat Resam Melayu*.

Of Abdul Hadi bin Hassan, the authors state that he "perhaps can be regarded as Malaysia's national historian. He wrote *Sejarah Alam Melayu* in three volumes which embodied the history lessons he had taught at the Sultan Idris Training College, Tanjong Malim, as its history master".

The above-mentioned works of four of the alumni of the Teachers Training College are undoubtedly more than sufficient as an overwhelming refutation of Pendita Za'ba's sweeping judgement of them.

The above sums up my well-meant criticism of Za'ba as a literary critic; it is in fact no more than a vindication of the said alumni as writers of at least some standing, even if they did not soar to the heights attained by him.

For the rest I venerate Za'ba as my Malay teacher at the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar. Over and above his unparalleled ability as a teacher of the Malay language for more than half a century, he devoted himself to the task of writing several books and numerous articles with the object of making Malay worthy of serious study as one of the major languages of the world.

It was not, however, only on the Malay language that he wrote so extensively. Malay poverty early claimed his attention as one of the subjects on which he wrote many articles.

I remember very vividly the day when his article entitled "Malay Poverty" was published in the editorial columns of *The Malay Mail* in 1922. He was then a young assistant master at the Malay College. Following this article he wrote another entitled "The Salvation of the Malays" in the same paper.

So that the vast majority of the Malays who could not read English might benefit from his views on the causes and cures of Malay poverty, he wrote a much longer article, "*Kemiskinan Orang Melayu*" which was serialised in the Malay periodical *Al Ikhwan* in 1927.

This long article was followed by an equally long one, "*Jalan Keselamatan Orang Melayu*", "The Way to Salvation for The Malays" which was also serialised in *Al Ikhwan* during the same year.

In these two articles he analysed the causes of Malay poverty so thoroughly and prescribed various remedial measures so exhaustively that there can be no doubt that he was the first Malay writer to point out the gravity of the problem and the urgent necessity of its being tackled by the Malays themselves.

Islam and its teachings were also another field in which Za'ba wrote fairly extensively, not only in the form of articles in the *Al Ikhwan*, *Qalam* and *Majallah Guru*, but also in the form of books on various doctrinal aspects of Islam.

Two of these books were banned in the state of Perak on the grounds that they were contrary to the orthodox teachings of Islam: the first one to be banned by order of Sultan Iskandar was entitled *Pendapatan Perbahasan Ulama Berkenaan Kadhar dan Kadar*. It was banned on the grounds that it was tainted with the *mu'tazilite* doctrine of free will. The second entitled *Falsafah Takdir* (The Philosophy of Fate) suffered the same fate when only one-third of the book had been printed.

The first book aroused the ire of Sultan Iskandar of Perak, who sent Mr. Cator, the British Resident, to Tanjong Malim, to acquaint Za'ba with the *murka* (anger) of the Sultan and to extort from him an abject apology for having dared to publish such a pernicious book advocating the heterodox doctrine of free will. He was also required to appeal to the Sultan to pardon him for having strayed from the straight and narrow path of orthodoxy as expounded by the *imam* of the four main sects of Islam.

Za'ba also wrote a number of articles on historical topics, Malay customs and etiquette, Malay idioms and pair-words which he contributed to the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*.

After his retirement from Government service at the age of fifty-five and after undergoing major surgery for the removal of a stone in his right kidney, he was appointed a lecturer in Malay Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University.

I will now retrace my steps and revert to the events of my early childhood after I had been admitted to the Malay school at Linggi.

During one of the school holidays I remember being taken to Seremban by my aunt Khadijah's husband, Dato' Laksamana

Abdul Majid, to witness a demonstration of balloon flying by a European balloonist.

This unique and hitherto unheard-of display took place on the *padang* in front of the Negri Sembilan Club. There was a very large and excited crowd of spectators milling round the balloon while it was still on the ground and being inflated.

It rose magically to a height of a couple of thousand feet and slowly floated away in the direction of the railway station until at last it became invisible. To this day I do not know where it eventually landed, whether on the ground or on the tree-tops in some distant forest.

On another occasion I was again taken to Seremban to see a travelling circus, called the Harmston Circus, which performed in a large tent on a site now occupied by Mr. Kee Seong's Bus Company and the Vivekananda Hall.

I was alternately thrilled and frightened to see a number of large elephants and tigers. The sight of beautiful European girls riding so expertly in a standing position on the backs of horses astonished me and the antics of the circus clowns made me laugh incontinently. But it was the daring exploits of young men and women on the flying trapeze that thrilled me most.

By that time, my aunt Rashidah's husband, Mohamad bin Abu had been transferred to the Land Office and promoted to the post of Settlement Officer, Seremban, and they no longer lived in the semi-detached wooden house in Temiang with the Japanese railway guard and his wife as their next-door neighbours. They had been alloted one of the newly-built row of government quarters on Labu Road. These quarters were provided with piped water and I remember the delight I experienced in opening the spout, shutting it up with the palm of my hand, thus making the water spurt in any direction I chose to direct it. But what I could not get used to was the malodorous smell of the bucket in the latrine with its load of human excrement and Jeyes Fluid to disinfect it.

During one of my visits to Seremban with my mother and grandmother, we made our first journey to Kajang by train.

A train journey in those days was by no means so pleasant and enjoyable as it is nowadays. For one thing the locomotive was coal-burning and steam-driven. Apart from the awful smell of the smoke emitted by the funnel of the locomotive, its speed did not exceed more than about twenty miles an hour and the

seats were merely bare boards, both in the second and third class coaches.

We travelled second class and the Japanese railway guard tried his best to make our first train journey as enjoyable as possible.

I was naturally very excited to find myself a passenger on the *keretapi* which I had read about in one of the Jawi primers at school, but my excitement turned to fright when we were suddenly plunged into absolute darkness as the train entered the long tunnel, through Bukit Tembok, about a mile north of Seremban Railway Station.

On arrival at Kajang we were welcomed by Mohamad, alias Mama, who worked as house-boy to *Tuan* Mollen, the manager of a rubber estate at Kajang. Mama had married Fatimah, the younger sister of Mohamad bin Abu, my aunt Rashidah's husband. We returned to Seremban by train on the following day.

Mohamad bin Abu was the first Linggi boy to be admitted to the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar in 1905, when the College was a mere plank-walled *atap*-roofed building and was known as the Malay Residential School. He belonged to the first batch of Negri Sembilan pupils of the school and was a classmate of the late Dato' Hamzah bin Abdullah, the first Malay to be promoted from the ranks of the Malay Administrative Service to the Malayan Civil Service in 1930*.

He was quite a good student and duly passed the government Seventh Standard Examination of those days. In addition, he was apparently a favourite of Mr. J. O'May, the headmaster's assistant, as the following letter from him testifies:

Kuala Kangsar
30.5.08

Dear Mohamad,

I enclose a testimonial. You certainly must not remain in your

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* Hamzah bin Abdullah began his government service as a humble clerk, next became no better than a Sub-Inspector of Coconuts, Selangor on 1.12.1908 and was on 1.5.1909 promoted to the post of Settlement Officer, Selangor from which post he was promoted to that of Acting Malay Assistant to District Officer, Sabak Bernam. He was eventually promoted to the M.C.S. as a Class V officer on 1.10.1921 as Assistant District Officer, Batang Padang.

present position, but work hard and learn all you can in it. Take what opportunities of reading you can get.

You are just starting out in life now. Begin by determining the school shall have cause to be proud of you, not only as a Government servant, but as a man. Never let yourself do anything that you would be ashamed to let us know. Don't smoke too much, and never begin to run after women, as so many silly young men do.

I hope you will make many friends in Seremban and be very happy, but it is always well to remember that friends may lead us into bad ways. The right thing to do is to do what one thinks right, whether other people approve or laugh.

I fully expect that you will succeed well. I should be glad to hear from you some time.

All good wishes from
Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) J. O'May

I found the above letter years later while rummaging in one of the drawers which formed part of the *pentas* in his and my aunt Rashidah's bedroom in the ancestral home.

As it turned out, O'May's advice was followed faithfully by its recipient and as we have seen, he was duly promoted from his lowly post of a clerk in the Seremban Sanitary Board to that of a Settlement Officer for the district of Seremban. In those days the post of Settlement Officer (S.O.) was quite often a stepping stone to that of an officer in the Malay Administrative Service.

Mohamad bin Abu did not run after women and remained faithful to my aunt Rashidah. While he very often told me how he enjoyed reading Sir Walter Scott's novel *Quentin Durward,* which was the book he had to study in the seventh standard class at the Malay Residential School, that was as far as his reading of good books went. For the rest, he became an avid reader of Sexton Blake detective stories, which were then sold at the Seremban railway station bookstall. He also bought at an auction many volumes of Charles Garvice's sloppy, sentimental love stories which rhapsodised over the love of the handsome son of an English peer of the realm for a beautiful gypsy girl etc.

At the same auction he also bought piles of the *Indian Review,* the articles of which were written in excellent English by highly educated Indians.

In any case, despite his addiction to large doses of Sexton

Blake and Charles Garvice, he had a very good command of English which he had no doubt acquired as a pupil of the M.C.K.K. with its carefully selected staff of English and Irish graduates of Oxford, Cambridge or Dublin Universities.

However, he never actually fulfilled O'May's expectation that he would succeed well. The reason for his failure to do so was not far to seek: he was of such a gentle, if not timid, character that an imperious wife could easily dominate him, and in this respect my aunt Rashidah can only be described as a shrew.

As an instance of her dominating character, there was the time when the government proposed to promote him to the post of Assistant District Officer, Sepang. My aunt Rashidah, whom her numerous nephews and nieces generally called Uchu Besek (Aunty Besek), peremptorily forbade him to accept the post on the ground that she did not want him to work in another state.

Then again a couple of years later he was offered the post of Assistant Town Planner, Kuala Lumpur, which he was again compelled to reject at the behest of my aunt.

His seeming lack of ambition, which in reality was a cover for his subservience to my aunt's every known wish, convinced the powers-that-be that it was an exercise in utter futility to try and promote him again. He was therefore left to stew in his own juice as the most senior Settlement Officer-cum-Assistant Collector of Land Revenue, Seremban. In that capacity, he retired from government service just before the Japanese invaded Malaya in December 1941.

I remember him well as a very kind, avuncular person, whom the younger generation generally called Uchu Mat Chohong (Uncle Mat Chohong), the word Chohong denoting a remote and obscure *kampung* in the district of Jasin, Malacca, and considered a suitable nickname for Mohamad Abu because he was born and reared as a boy in the then already deserted village of Solok across the Linggi *sawah*.

He always affectionately called me Teng, which is the contraction of my boyhood nickname of Keteng.

When he was about forty or so, he was stricken with pesipheral neuritis which was most probably the dry form of beriberi. He was granted medical leave and returned to the ancestral home in Linggi.

To cure himself of the disease, he resorted to self-medication by dosing himself with a patent medicine called Sulphur Bitters.

If one were to believe what was written on the labels pasted on the large bottles of this patent medicine, many of which he had bought at the Federal Dispensary, Seremban, (now Hew Pharmacy Sdn. Bhd.), Sulphur Bitters was a panacea for all diseases My uncle gulped down tablespoonfuls of it without the slightest intention of finding out from a qualified doctor, government or private, whether the stuff was really the right treatment for his beri-beri.

Thus it was that it took about two months before he got better. With the hindsight of a doctor, I believe it was the mixed diet of unpolished *kampung* rice and various kinds of foodstuffs and fruits containing Vitamin B_1 that was the real cause of the gradual improvement in his complaint.

As soon as the pain in his legs became less and he was at last able to walk about he began to busy himself making bamboo fish-traps called *sentak-sentak*. He made four of these and with me accompanying him to the *sawah* one evening, he set the four traps in the river at intervals of about ten yards.

After breakfast the next morning, he and I proceeded to the *sawah* and, pulling the cords attached to the fish-traps so as to close them, we hauled the traps to the bank of the river and were delighted to find each trap containing a fair number of *ikan terebul*, *ikan putih*, *ikan haruan* and the smaller species of prawns. It was in this fashion that he spent the rest of his two months' medical leave, at the end of which he was quite cured.

Other evidence of his kindness were his *Hari Raya* presents to me, a velvet cap and a pair of shoes to be worn on *Hari Raya* Day. In those days, it was fashionable for young boys and even young men to wear velvet *songkoks* of various colours, red, blue, brown and violet. He also brought back many packets of *mercun* or *peta* (crackers) and tangerines for us to eat on the festival days.

In those days a *Hari Raya* festival was celebrated on a relatively lavish scale. From about the middle of the holy month of *Ramadan*, the womenfolk started to make many traditional Malay cakes which are no longer made these days.

On *tujuh likur* evening, i.e., three days before *Hari Raya Puasa* or *Idilfitri*, the compounds of most houses were gaily lit up with *pelita buluh* which were lamps propped up on two slender bamboo poles. A big hole was made at one end of each section of the bamboo and in the middle of the section a smaller hole was

bored, through which about four inches of the smaller variety of bamboo with a wick in it was inserted.

Kerosene oil was poured into the big hole to fill up the whole section of bamboo, the wicks were then lighted. As a *pelita buluh* was generally provided with at least four wicks, these lamps were sufficient to light up the compound of a *kampung* house.

A simpler and cheaper mode of lighting consisted in using *tempurung* or coconut shells. Circular holes having been made in them, these coconut shells were then piled on a wooden stick stuck in the ground. The topmost shell was then set on fire which gradually burned it up, the fire then spreading to the shell beneath it until the last coconut shell was consumed.

It was my delight as a young boy on *tujuh likur* eve to fire many packets of China-made crackers. As other boys also did the same thing the whole *kampung* resounded with a veritable din of exploding crackers.

On the night before *Hari Raya*, the house compound was lighted up with *pelita buluh*, supplemented with piles of burning coconut shells. At about 5.30 a.m. on *Hari Raya* morning we boys woke up and resorted to cracker-firing on a much greater scale, the boys of a particular house vying with those of the neighbouring ones in the sheer delight of welcoming the dawn of *Hari Raya*.

After our bath and a breakfast of *lemang* and *rendang* or *ketupat* and *serikaya* and coffee or tea, we donned our *Hari Raya* finery and went to the mosque. Most of us *kampung* boys went to the mosque not so much to attend the *Hari Raya* prayers as to sate ourselves with the numerous types of traditional Malay cakes which our elders had brought to the mosque.

After the visit to the mosque, I always went to houses of my closest relatives to pay my respects to them and to be entertained by them with more cakes and sweetmeats.

On *Hari Raya* day some of us were lucky enough to be able to wear shoes. On one occasion, my aunt Rashidah gave me a *Hari Raya* present of a pair of soft boots. I remember that these boots bore the label of Ban Jee Long, a Seremban Chinese shoemaker.

Quite unused to wearing footwear of any kind, the boots soon caused blisters in the heels of both my feet so that it was quite painful to walk any further than my aunt Halus's house. So I returned home with my boots slung on my right shoulder, to the

amusement of everyone at home.

I must say that life as a *kampung* boy was so full of interesting things to do, to see, to hear, to learn and get to know that a boy who cannot be reasonably happy living there must be considered a dullard.

For instance, I used to accompany my aunt Khadijah's husband, Dato' Laksamana Abdul Majid, in the interesting sport of *memikat balam* (snaring turtle-doves). He was the leading enthusiast of this pastime in Linggi for many years.

Besides himself, the participants in this sport usually consisted of two or three others, such as Tok Uda Mat Amin of Pengkalan Kundang, Pak Woke Pakeh, Khalid's step-father, and *Imam* Ambak of Tampin Kiri. They would sally forth from their homes as early as five in the morning in order to arrive at a prearranged rendezvous in a rubber estate known to be the habitat of turtle-doves.

They carried their *pemikat* decoy doves in cages covered with protective curtains to conceal these specially trained decoys from the wild ones, which wake up at sunrise, flying and cooing among the rubber trees.

My uncle's pet decoy called *Murai* (Magpie) was well-known in the dove-snaring circles of Linggi as the decoy *par excellence*, so that as they approached the rubber estate, Murai began to coo enticingly in response to the song of the wild doves.

Having reached their destination, the three or four snarers disposed themselves about a hundred yards from one another, released their decoys from their cages, tethered them to the ground and planted their horse-hair snares called *racik* in the ground in front of and close to the decoys.

Having fed their decoys with *padi* or unhusked rice grains, they hid themselves in the *belukar* adjacent to the rubber estate and waited with bated breath for the dramatic encounters between their decoys and the wild doves they had enticed to that part of the ground on which the snares had been planted.

As the wild doves approached the decoys their legs were caught in one or sometimes two of the snares. The snarers then emerged from their hideouts and having disentangled the wild doves' legs from the snares, put them in a *pundi-pundi*, or cloth bag.

A bird-snaring session generally lasted until about 10 a.m. for at about that time the wild doves would cease to respond to the

enticing cooing of the decoys, being preoccupied in foraging for food.

Whether each of the snarers would succeed in snaring at least one dove each depended a great deal on the ability of his decoy to entice his wild brothers. Not all of them were successful in securing their prey, as it quite often happened that the superior merits of Murai, my uncle's decoy, ensured that he succeeded in bagging more than one bird.

During the school holidays I often accompanied my uncle and his fellow snarers in their expeditions to several estates, ranging from Kundor and Pengkalan Durian to Sua Betong and Sua Gerenseng estates about five miles to the north of Linggi.

My uncle, Dato' Laksamana Abdul Majid, whom I called Bah was so keenly interested in this sport that even the hunger and thirst of the fasting month of *Ramadan* did not deter him from engaging in it.

Should he fail to persuade his fellow devotees to join him in his ardent pursuit of the sport, he always had me to fall back upon to keep him company.

I remember as though it were yesterday how, in defiance of a cold and wet morning, we proceeded to Tampin Linggi Estate about one-and-a-half miles from Kampung Tengah. It had been raining very heavily the previous night and it was still drizzling when we set out on our journey.

Having arrived at our destination, my uncle tethered his decoy Murai on the ground and planted his *racik* in front of the decoy, and we hid ourselves behind a bush on one side of the estate.

Very soon Murai's enticing coos were answered by a wild dove which flew down from a rubber tree and slowly approached the decoy. For about half-an-hour Murai cooed his heart out, but the wild bird answered in subdued tones. My uncle told me that the bird was a female one, which was the reason why it was rather coy in getting nearer to Murai. As the latter was tethered to the ground, he was prevented from acting as he should as the aggressive male partner in the love-play. The female bird could not naturally be expected to assume the aggressive role. In the end she flew off, perhaps disappointed at Murai's failure to consummate his courtship.

We crouched behind the bush for another hour, waiting for the response of other birds to Murai's cooing, but to no avail. It

soon began to drizzle again and the wild doves ceased altogether to answer the decoy's invitation to come down.

My uncle was disappointed at the failure of the day's outing and perhaps to assuage his disappointment, he took out his packet of Double Eagle cigarettes and, having warned me not to tell my aunt Khadijah that he was breaking his fast, he lighted one and soon was puffing away to his heart's content. As he reached the last inch of the cigarette he handed it to me to smoke. This I readily did with the coughing and spluttering usually attendant upon the first experience of cigarette smoking.

Thus all that I gained out of that day's outing was to be initiated into the habit of smoking at the tender age of ten or so.

After that day, my uncle and I made further outings to neighbouring rubber estates in pursuit of turtle doves during the fasting month and succeeded in snaring some ten of them, and during these expeditions my uncle made no bones about smoking his cigarettes and handing the last inch or so for me to smoke. In this way, by the end of the fasting month, I had already become a confirmed smoker.

In any event, I was quite faithful in honouring the pact I had made with my uncle, which was not to disclose to my aunt Khadijah the fact that he had repeatedly broken his fast.

In view of these frequent lapses from grace in the matter of fasting during the month of *Ramadan*, the reader is justified in concluding that my uncle was not a very religious man. In this respect, he differed from almost all the other members of the extended family who may be described as quite puritanical in both their religious views and in their practice and who never flinched from rigidly observing the extremely austere Islamic month of fasting.

And his habit of giving me the last inch or so of the cigarette he had smoked during our dove-snaring expeditions and his surreptitious way of doing so at home when my mother or aunt Khadijah was not watching us indicated that he had no very sound idea of how a young boy should be brought up. Nevertheless I loved him very much because he lavished his love and affection upon me during that period in my boyhood when I was constantly being reminded of my orphaned state by all sorts of well-meaning people.

The doves that he had snared during the fasting month he

kept in a large bamboo cage. He fed them daily with *padi* until they had grown fat and fleshy. They were then slaughtered and my aunt Khadijah, who was a very good cook, made such a tasty curry of them as would tickle the taste-buds of a gourmet.

Another form of sport in which I was very interested was bird-liming.

The lime was made of the latex of the *jelutung* tree mixed with the sap of another jungle tree called *minyak kuing* and then boiled until the mixture was reduced to a sticky, gluey lump of bird-lime.

I used to accompany a bigger boy, Mat Pendek, to a little stream situated in a bamboo grove adjacent to a shallow well near the Linggi mosque. Mat Pendek and I uprooted four or five *senuduk* shrubs and having denuded their branches of leaves, we smeared them with bird-lime and stuck the shrubs at intervals of ten feet from one another in the shallow stream.

At about two o'clock in the afternoon when the sun was at its hottest, it was expected that such birds as *merbah*, *bebarau* and *murai* would fly to the stream and bathe in its cool water. So we hid ourselves behind a clump of bamboo trees and waited patiently for the first batch of birds to come and cool themselves in the limpid water of the stream.

We had not long to wait, for soon a couple of *merbah* (the smaller species of bulbul) and a solitary *murai* disported themselves in the stream, fluttering their wings in the water and occasionally dipping their heads in it.

As expected, after it had apparently splashed about sufficiently in the stream, one of the bulbuls decided to call it a day and perched itself upon one of the lime-smeared branches of the *senuduk*. Its claws got stuck to the branch and in the struggle to free itself, its wings also became stuck to the other lime-smeared *senuduk* branches.

On hearing its cries of distress, Mat Pendek and I rushed to the stream and disentangled the bulbul from the *senuduk* branches. While doing so, Mat Pendek's hands were viciously pecked at by the bulbul. The other *merbah* and the *murai* were frightened by us and flew away.

Returning to our hiding place, Mat Pendek ritually cut the neck of the bulbul in the manner prescribed by Islam to render the eating of its flesh permissible.

After waiting for about half-an-hour, no less than four *bebarau*

(the bigger species of bulbul) descended upon the stream to take their bath. This species of bulbul is much more boisterous than the *merbah* and the attention of Mat Pendek and I was soon attracted to their clamourous excitement while they disported themselves in the crystal-clear water of the stream.

After about five minutes, two of them perched themselves on the branches of two separate *senuduk* shrubs and fluttered their wings to shake off any excess of water they had doused themselves with. Their claws and wings got stuck in the branches, whereupon they set up such an angry outcry as prompted us to rush to the stream in order to release the two birds from the entangling branches.

The *bebarau*, being a much bigger bulbul than the *merbah*, both Mat Pendek and I were subjected to fierce peckings by the two bulbuls. We brought them to our hideout and Mat Pendek promptly cut their necks in the ritual manner.

Our bag had so far consisted of two *bebarau* and a *merbah*, and we waited patiently for more birds to come and bathe in the stream. By 3.30 p.m. one more *bebarau* was added to our "catch" and we decided to call it a day, as the sun had declined in the western sky and it was unlikely that any more birds which had sweltered in the fierce heat of the sun would come to the stream to cool themselves.

Mat Pendek gave me one *bebarau* and one *merbah* as my share while he himself took two *bebarau* as his. That night my mother fried the *bebarau* and *merbah* and my sister Nur, Kassim and I enjoyed the delicious *goreng bebarau* and *goreng merbah* as additional *lauk* to be eaten with rice.

Mat Pendek decided that it was unwise to confine our bird-liming activity to one particular stream everyday so that on the following days we visited several other streams in Linggi where birds were known to take a bath at about two o'clock in the afternoon. In that way not a day passed without our bagging at least a couple of *merbah*, *bebarau*, kingfishers or some other species of birds.

It was an enjoyable and exciting sport while it lasted, but soon the rainy season set in and the birds ceased to frequent the streams and Mat Pendek had to hang up his coconut bowl of bird-lime.

Whenever I was taken to Seremban on one of those early trips to the state capital, I always visited my uncle Haji Sulaiman's widow, Andak Yam. She lived in a plank-walled, *atap*-roofed house in the compound of her step-father Haji Ahmad's* two-storeyed brick house at Limbok, a Malay *kampung* on the northern outskirts of the town. She was then in her late thirties and still retained her beauty.

She had three sons living with her, Mohamed Salleh, Abdul Hamid and Abass. Her third son, Abdul Malek, had been given away to Kak Hendon, my uncle Haji Sulaiman's daughter by his first wife.

Mohamed Salleh was a pupil of the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar, while Abdul Hamid later became a pupil of St. Paul's Institution, Seremban, and the youngest son, Abass, that of King George V School.

All three of them eventually got through the Senior Cambridge Examination. Mohamed Salleh was chosen as a Malay probationer in the Special Class, which had been set up in 1910 to train future members of the Malay Administrative Service (M.A.S.).

Abdul Hamid later became a temporary teacher while waiting for the reply to his application for admission to the King Edward VII College of Medicine, Singapore. He was successful in his application and with my friend, Megat Khas, and me, he became a medical student in 1925.

The third son, Abdul Malek, had the misfortune of being handed over to the tender mercies of his half-sister Hendon, the wife of Cikgu Yaacob, who had succeeded my uncle Ibrahim as headteacher of the Linggi Malay School.

Kak Hendon turned out to be a very cruel half-sister. Malek was made to do all sorts of household chores and was not allowed to play with other boys of his age. Whenever he did so, Kak Hendon subjected him to a very cruel form of punishment, which consisted in tying him up to the fence surrounding the school compound and then tying a nest of red ants next to his bare body.

The bites of these red ants are very painful and Malek screamed with pain. Cikgu 'Akob, however, was not a cruel man

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* Haji Ahmad, Andak Yam's step-father, was a retired visiting teacher.

and it was generally he who mercifully released Malek from this painful ordeal.

The frequent beatings he had to endure at the hands of his half-sister, in addition to the occasional red ant treatment described above, retarded his educational progress. My uncle, Mohamed bin Dato' Muda Haji Mohd. Peral, who was then the headteacher of the Temiang Malay School, Seremban, heard about the cruel treatment and going back to Linggi, he gave her the severest tongue-lashing she had ever experienced in her life and promptly released Malek from his durance vile, took him back to Seremban and got him admitted to the Temiang Malay School.

There he found that Malek had a lot of leeway to make up, as while he was at Linggi he was quite frequently forced by Kak Hendon to absent himself from school and look after her infant son, Baharudin, while she did her washing at the well, or her cooking. Being a hen-pecked husband there was nothing that Cikgu 'Akob could do about his wife's subversion of his authority as headteacher.

Thus it was that Malek lagged behind his younger brother Abass. When at last he was duly admitted to the King George School in Seremban he did not progress beyond Standard VII, when he dropped out. When years later he spoke to me about his relative failure as a schoolboy, he always attributed it to the beatings and tortures that his half-sister inflicted on him as a child.

I remember very vividly when one night Hamid and I went to see *Jula Juli Bintang Tujuh*, a traditional romance staged by a troupe of travelling *bangsawan* actors and actresses in a large tent at an open plot of land now occupied by Mr. Kee Seong's bus company and the Vivekananda Hall at the Seremban end of the Labu Road.

Paying twenty cents each for a "gallery" seat, we were entranced by the sight of the handsome hero and the beautiful heroine and a bevy of *dayang-dayang* dressed in glittering costumes which we had never seen before. At a particular period in the progress of the drama, we were startled by a loud bang which heralded the appearance of the beautiful princess surrounded by a halo of seven bright stars, and the farcical remarks of the clowns caused us to shriek with laughter, while the posturings of the inevitable *jin* with his black visage, fiery eyes, his

long bristling hair and loud laughter filled us with fear and dread.

That was the first *bangsawan* performance I had ever seen and when years later I was studying medicine at Singapore my friend Megat Khas and I became regular patrons of the "City Opera" performing at the Jalan Besar Amusement Park. That was the heyday of the *bangsawan*, which was patronised not only by the Malays but also by many wealthy Straits-born Chinese.

At the time of my visit to my aunt Andak Yam at Limbok, Haji Ahmad's house was the only brick house in it, all the rest being the traditional Malay wooden houses built on pillars. In the course of time all the land lots originally belonging to Malays were bought by Chinese, as has happened to the Malay-owned land at Temiang. Haji Ahmad's land and house were retained by his heirs until recently when they were sold to a Chinese towkay for $90,000. Although the house was in a bad state of disrepair, land values in Seremban had so sky-rocketed that the towkay considered the price demanded by Haji Ahmad's heirs a mere song.

The same process of dispossession of Malays who owned land in the outskirts of Seremban has happened in Rasah, which, before 1874 and for a number of years after the treaty of protection was signed by Dato' Klana Syed Abdul Rahman and my grandfather Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Peral, was the mart for the tin and other forms of trade and was regarded as the capital of the state of Sungai Ujong.

This process has affected even the town of Port Dickson, where Kampung Gelam has disappeared from the Town Council area, having been bought over piecemeal by non-Malays, mainly the local Chinese towkays.

I dare say Malay-owned land in other towns, large or small, has long ago been bought over by non-Malays. Our colonial District Officers could not have been unaware of the plight of the Malay town-dwellers. However, they were so preoccupied with the exploitation of the country's tin and with the giddy process of recommending for the approval of the British Resident huge acres of land for conversion to rubber estates, that no thought was given to them. British and other foreign-owned estates were allowed to encroach on Malay *kampung* land so that it became impossible for the *kampung* to expand to accommodate their own increasing population. Indeed if one travels

throughout the length and breadth of the country, one is everywhere confronted with the phenomenon of Malay *kampung* being hemmed in on every side by foreign-owned rubber estates. For it was the policy of our so-called protectors, headed by the British Resident in each state, to alienate the best land situated on each side of all roads and railways to their own countrymen in the United Kingdom, who were the shareholders of these large rubber estates and tin mines.

What was left for the Malays was third- and fourth-class land away from roads and railways. It is on this type of land that their smallholdings of rubber, coconut or coffee are situated.

After the best agricultural and mining land had been alienated, as a sort of sop to Cerebus, the powers-that-be at last enacted the Malay Reservation Enactment in every state, making it unlawful for the alienation of such land to non-Malays. These enactments however, contained provisions giving British Residents the power to excise any portion of Malay Reservation Land and to alienate it to a rubber or tin mining company, provided they replaced the excised portion of land with state land of the same acreage.

In general, the replacements comprised land lots further and further away from the road and railways and to this day they are covered by virgin jungle, the Malays being too poor to develop them. In Negri Sembilan particularly, during the period 1964–1969, i.e. during my second term as Menteri Besar, I found that several thousands of acres of Malay Reservation Land had already been alienated to *kampung* Malays in pre-Merdeka days but had remained in their pristine state as jungle land.

Even now, twenty-four years after Merdeka, the few bits and pieces of Malay-owned land in the towns of Malaysia, i.e. land not subject to the Malay Reservation Enactment, are still being sold to non-Malays. The owners of these town lots find the phenomenal sums offered by the prospective buyers too tempting to be rejected. This is what the Economic Bureau of the Malay Youth wing of UMNO under the able and energetic leadership of Tuan Haji Suhaimi bin Dato' Kamaruddin has recently discovered after the most exhaustive investigation yet undertaken by UMNO.

It is therefore, as plain as a pikestaff that the National Front Government under the leadership of Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir

Mohamad must step in and devise some measure or measures to prevent the sale of the remaining few town lots belonging to Malays. One possible solution is for UDA to take over these lots and develop them for their owners and by an agreement with their owners rent out the buildings built on them to entrepreneurs, be they Malays or non-Malays, and the rental shared on a fifty-fifty basis between UDA and the owners.

To revert to the memories of my childhood, I remember very distinctly that the bridle path from my ancestral home to the Malay School, a distance of about a quarter of a mile, was hedged on both sides with innumerable *kemunting* shrubs interspersed with *senuduk* shrubs and *tempoyan* trees. These were all seasonal fruit or rather berry-bearing trees.

During the fruit season these *kemunting* and *senuduk* shrubs were generally loaded with berries. They attracted many bulbuls which gorged themselves on either the *kemunting*, *senuduk* or *tempoyan* berries. My playmates and I were more partial to the *kemunting* than the other two berries and, in no time at all, we were able to gather enough berries to fill our two pockets. The ripe *kemunting* berries were really quite delicious to eat. On the other hand, the *senuduk* berries were violet-coloured and besides not being very delicious generally stained our lips violet so that we generally left them for the bulbuls to eat. The *tempoyan* berries were quite nice to eat when they were fully ripe but have an astringent taste.

Nowadays, however, the flora of Linggi has changed very much. There is not a single *kemunting*, *senuduk* shrub and *tempoyan* tree to be seen anywhere and the winding bridle path along which we threaded our way to school has been converted into a laterite road as far as the Linggi mosque. Other wild, uncultivated fruit trees such as the *nanam*, *sentol*, *ramunia*, *pauh*, *lanjut*, *binjai*, and *redan* are nowhere to be seen. The secondary jungle near the mosque in which my friends and I used to go in search of *buah mempedal ayam* has been cleared and houses built on the area.

The fauna too has changed. During my boyhood several species of *musang* or civet cats, including the malodorous *musang jebat* and the large *musang tenggalong* used to raid fowl houses and hawks used to prey on chickens and ducks. On some nights we used to hear the growling of tigers hailing from the deserted

Kampung Solok across the ricefield. They sometimes prowled about the *kampung*, as was evidenced by the fact that on my way to school I quite often saw their pug marks in clay ground near the mosque.

For a couple of months the people of several *kampung* in Linggi were terrorised by a man-eating tiger. The first victim was a young man of Pengkalan Dian called Mat Dom.

He was tapping rubber by the edge of secondary jungle when he was pounced upon by "Mr. Stripes" and carried away into the undergrowth. His cries for help were heard by another tapper working at an adjacent smallholding. This man rushed back to the *kampung* and gathered a number of men who ran to the jungle edge, taking empty tins with them and banging them to scare away the tiger.

They succeeded in doing so and going for a couple of hundred yards into the jungle found Mat Dom with a chunk of his right shoulder bitten off and carried away by the tiger. But Mat Dom was in a very severe state of shock, having lost a great deal of blood, and soon he died.

After his initial kill, the tiger went on a rampage and not a day passed without another man or woman being attacked, killed and partially eaten. The victims were of all nationalities, Malays, Chinese and Indians and one Javanese. Most of the killings happened in broad daylight usually in the early morning when the victims were tapping rubber in smallholdings or clearing these smallholdings of undergrowth and *lallang* with *parang* and *cangkul*.

Within a radius of two miles from the Malay School nobody considered himself safe from the tiger.

In all cases, the dead bodies of the victims were found at the very latest in the evening of the next day after the victim had been reported missing.

The parents of schoolboys were so scared that they forbade their children to attend school and my uncle for once did not go into a fit of ill-temper crying out, "*Cabutkan bendera Tuan Resident!*" ("Pull down the Union Jack at the British Resident's!"), his usual way of expressing his anger and disgust, when boys were absent from school.

This "wild tiger" period lasted for about a month until Tok Ngah Kerani, a retired audit clerk, and his friends constructed a trap made of large and heavy logs. In the centre of the ground

under the upraised trap a rectangular pit was dug in which a cage, which had been devised by the P.W.D. at the direction of the District Officer, Port Dickson, was placed. A goat was tied to the further end of the trap to lure the tiger into the trap.

On hearing the bleating of the goat, the tiger sprang into the trap, thus treading on the cord designed to cause the trap to drop to the ground. At the same time as it sprang into the trap, the tiger fell into the steel cage, the lid of which fell and closed the cage.

Tok Ngah Kerani and his band of helpers having lifted the heavy trap up from the ground proceeded to further secure the lid of the cage with thick steel wires and having looped very stout *ijok* tapes to both ends of the rectangular cage lifted it from the pit and with a stout *kandar* stick, four of his helpers carried the caged tiger to Tok Ngah Kerani's house compound. There for a couple of days the *kampung* folk came in droves to see the tiger which had killed about a dozen people.

The tiger was a full-grown one and after being kept for about a week in the compound of Tok Ngah Kerani's house, it was decided to present it to His Highness, the Yang di Pertuan Besar of Seri Menanti.

After this tiger had been presented to the Yamtuan, the trap was re-set daily as it was thought his mate, the tigress, was bound to miss her mate. This time, however, no special cage was placed inside the pit, the people relying upon the heavy logs to crush the tigress to death, or alternatively, in case the tigress fell into the pit, they would shoot her to death.

Nothing happened for about a week. However, after inspecting the trap, it was found that the trap had fallen to the ground, thus falling heavily on the tigress and crushing her to death. At about 10 a.m. one morning while we boys were performing calisthenics on the football field under the instruction of my uncle Ibrahim, we saw the dead tigress being carried on a *kandar* stick by a couple of men followed by the usual crowd of spectators.

The carcass of the tigress was presented to the District Officer who no doubt had it skinned. Tok Ngah Kerani and his fellow trappers duly received cash rewards from H.H. the Yang di Pertuan Besar Muhammad as well as from the government.

However, tigers were not the only members of the feline tribe. There was the much rarer leopard, called *harimau belang* by the Malays and the smaller *harimau 'akar*. These "lesser" breeds

exacted their toll of goats and cattle and sometimes forced their way into fowl houses and devoured chickens and ducks.

My grandmother used to tell me that, when she was a young girl, *seladang* or the wild and ferocious Malayan oxen ranged freely in the jungles surrounding Linggi. She pointed to the mounted horns of a *seladang* which were nailed to the lintel of her bedroom and told me they were the horns of a *seladang* which my grandfather, Haji Mohd. Peral, had shot and killed. Sambur deer were plentiful in these jungles and on the pillars in the *tengah rumah* of the ancestral home during my childhood many stags' horns could be seen, trophies which he had acquired during his younger sporting days.

There was an elephant gun in the house which I found among the collection of muskets and blunderbusses in his collection. These weapons were used by his warriors during the turbulent days of internecine warfare between the Datuk Klana and Dato' Bandar of Sungai Ujong, during which my grandfather generally allied himself with the former. They were also used during the struggle between himself and the Undang of Rembau for the control of the fort at Sempang. In one of the drawers of his *pentas* I found the large cartridges for the elephant gun. These findings testified to the fact that in the early days, before the jungles around Linggi were cleared for the planting of rubber, all manner of big game was to be found in them.

Of the smaller game, *pelanduk* (mousedeer) and *napuh* (large mousedeer) were also plentiful and traps were set to catch them or shotguns used to shoot them.

Of birds, both the common green pigeons and *dekut* or ground pigeons were plentiful. I remember very vividly the occasion when, one late afternoon, a number of British officers came down to Linggi from Seremban to shoot pigeons as they flew in coveys of thirty to forty over the Linggi ricefields. The officers shot them down in twos or threes. I remember that my uncle Ibrahim, our headteacher, participated in this sport, but as he used a muzzle-loading gun—gunpowder, wad, shot and all, —the pigeons had out-distanced him before he could take a shot at them.

During the rainy season, British government officers and planters used to come down to Linggi to shoot snipes in the swampy area between Pengkalan Kundang, the present township of Linggi, and the *kampung* of Permarang Rasir. As they did

not use retrievers to recover the snipes, the service of my friends and I was solicited to help them locate the birds they had shot down. As we were each generally given ten cents for our assistance, we felt amply compensated for having had to muddy our legs in the marshy ground.

As for the *dekut* or ground pigeons, a *buluh dekut* or bamboo pipe, which, when blown, sounds very like the cooing of the bird, was used. The pigeon was thus lured to open ground where it was caught with a snare. The man blowing the bamboo pipe hid himself inside a kind of arbour called *bumbun*, so that the ground pigeons were unaware of the risk of listening to the "siren song" of the *buluh dekut*. Thus it was that in a day's outing a man might be able to snare half a dozen of these birds, the flesh of which was even more tasty than that of the green pigeons.

Wild fowls, called *ayam denak* by the Malays, were also plentiful in the secondary jungle round about Linggi. The way to get them was generally by using a decoy bird, generally a hybrid between a jungle cock and a domesticated hen. These hybrid cocks generally resemble jungle cocks in appearance and they crow exactly like their jungle cousins so that the latter generally approach the decoy birds to fight them for having encroached on their special domain. As soon as they come within range of gunshot, they are generally shot down. The flesh of a jungle fowl is generally tougher than that of a domestic one. Nevertheless, it is much relished by Malays, if only as a change of diet.

In the tributary of the Linggi River, which bisected the ricefields, there were plenty of fish to be caught by means of hooks, nets or fish-traps.

Because freshwater fish were so plentiful in this river and because they were so cheap, I did not suffer from malnutrition due to protein deficiency. I remember that my grandmother was always ordering fish from a Javanese man called Pak Mat Jawa, who was a past master in the art of catching fish by means of the fish-trap known as *lukah* in Malay.

Besides buying fish from him, my mother was a keen angler who specialised in fishing for climbing perch. For bait she used the eggs of red ants. As the bite of this species of ant is quite painful it was necessary to kill them in their nests by burning them with a torch made of the dry coconut fronds called *andang*.

This species of river fish is quite delicious when cooked with

daun kesom, the aromatic leaves of a shrub that grows wild in the ricefield, or fried to a turn until they become crisp. My mother kept the small fry among her day's catch in a big jar and fed them daily with the eggs of red ants, broken rice grains and odds and ends of fish feed until they grew fat enough to be cooked or fried.

My grandmother owned six acres of riceland, two acres of which were planted with wet *padi* by my aunt Khadijah and my mother and four acres given to others to cultivate on condition they paid us about a fourth of their yearly crop. The riceland was quite fertile and without using any fertiliser, the yield was about 400 *gantangs* per acre so that we were well provided with home-grown rice.

When the *padi* grains were beginning to ripen, hundreds of birds of the finch tribe (*Pipit*) were attracted to the *padi* fields and my mother and aunt Khadijah were hard put to scare them away. Scarecrows were quite ineffective in doing this, so empty tins containing stones were hung up on poles and I was generally entrusted with the task of pulling the ropes attached to these tins. The din created thereby for a time was effective in driving the little birds away, but they soon got used to the noise and returned to feed on the ripening grains.

I kept a couple of *pipit uban* as pets in a cage. I also used them as decoys to attract other members of their tribe into a bird trap called *jebak*. I also used bird-lime smeared round the twigs of a shrub which had been denuded of leaves, so that these little birds alighting on the twigs, generally got stuck on them by their feet or wings.

When the *padi* grains were just beginning to ripen, some stalks were generally cut and the unripe *padi* grains were first lightly fried and then pounded into a state resembling Quaker Oats. They are then known as *emping* and, eaten with coconut scrapings or coconut milk with sugar, are quite delicious.

The pounding of the semi-fried, semi-ripe *padi* grains in a lighter kind of wooden mortar was generally done by young unmarried girls and each girl so timed her pounding that the combined effect of three or four girls pounding at specific times generally sounded like a tune, not unpleasant to hear. As during the appropriate season, the delightful task of *mengemping* is generally done in three or four neighbouring houses, the *kampung* is loud with the pleasant noise of wooden *antan* or pestles strik-

ing wooden *lesung* or mortars.

If the semi-ripe *padi* grains were fried longer than necessary to make *emping*, the *padi* grains generally burst with a pop, resulting in the formation of *bertih* or pop-rice. *Bertih* is not generally eaten in any quantity by Malays but is generally used to bless the bride and bridegroom at the *bersanding* ceremony. The *bertih* is showered on them, along with the rice paste (*tepung tawar*) and rose water sprinkled on their hands.

I have forgotten to mention that, as I grew old enough to understand many things which had hitherto puzzled me, I became aware of the existence of a stunted middle-aged woman dressed in shabby clothes. She was called Sadah and was in reality a *Sakai* woman, who had apparently been captured as a young child in one of his hunting expeditions by my grandfather and had been enslaved by him. Those were the days when slavery was rampant throughout Malaya and was only abolished after British rule had become fully established in the Malay States.

Sadah lived in a small hut in the compound of my ancestral home. There she was given rice and other foodstuffs to cook in her own way. During the daytime she was employed in clearing the ground in front of the house of grass and weeds. She was already too old to perform other chores such as carrying water from the well.

She spoke Malay incoherently and for lack of proper training was incapable of understanding anything beyond simple commands. She became the butt of unkind jokes and was unmercifully teased by the *kampung* boys about her *Sakai* past. I regret to say that in those teasings I joined my friends in exasperating the poor creature, who chased us all over the *kampung*. However, as she had become rather fat and flabby she never came within hailing distance of catching any of her tormentors.

As I become older, however, and outgrew the cruelty inherent in very young children, I took great pity on this poor woman and ceased from plaguing her. I visited her in her hut in the evening and gave her extra food that I pilfered from the kitchen. She grew very much attached to me.

She was apparently not the only slave of my grandfather, Dato' Muda Haji Mohamad Peral. On his return from a pilgrimage to Mecca in the late eighties of the nineteenth century he brought back to Linggi a Habshi (Ethiopian) woman. I was

told by my mother that this woman died of a disease very suggestive of naso-pharyngeal cancer. This happened, of course, long before I was born.

The trapping of quails was another sport to which I became addicted. For this purpose it was necessary to persuade Abdul Ghani, a second cousin of mine who was a Koran teacher of the Malay school, to make a *serkap* or a quail trap for me.

Quails are a low-flying, elusive type of bird and to trap them it is essential to locate the spots where they have rolled about in the ashes of a recent fire. Having located these spots, called *pupur*, the *serkap* is set up over one of them. When the quail returns to the same spot to roll about in the ashes, it will inevitably come in contact with the string which holds up the *serkap*. The *serkap* then drops to the ground, thus entrapping the quail. I caught a couple of quails in this way and kept them in a cage at home, feeding them everyday with grasshoppers. However, quails were by no means plentiful and once one or two had been caught, the rest seemed to sense the danger of frequenting the place where others had been trapped. So I soon gave up the sport of trapping them, leaving it to the grown-ups to venture further afield in search of quails' *pupur*.

My mother never ceased to remind me that I was an orphan and that therefore I must study hard. I did not mind being so reminded by my own mother, but when other people did so, I felt somehow humiliated and I resented it when, in accordance with Malay custom, they stroked my head to demonstrate their sympathy for me.

I think it was due to my mother's persistent urging that I determined to do well at school. But however hard I strove, I was never able to beat my second cousin, Yazid, who was six months older than I was. He always succeeded in being the first boy in the class and I, the second.

During my school days in Linggi the First World War was raging in Europe. Of this war I was blissfully unaware until during my last year at the Linggi Malay School, the illustrated monthly periodical *Taswiri* was shown to us by my uncle, Cikgu Ibrahim. There were pictures of the trench warfare on the Western front and of German prisoners-of-war. There were also pictures of Marshall Foch, Sir Douglas Haig, and most curious of all, pictures of the first British tanks. For a few months, there was a shortage of rice, and rationing was introduced to supple-

ment the meagre quantity of rice allowed to each household. Flour was doled out by the powers-that-be. But in November 1918, the Armistice was signed between the victorious Allied Powers and the defeated Central Powers.

Soon after the Armistice had been signed, there occurred the great pandemic of influenza which exacted a terrible toll of human lives, exceeding in number the total casualties suffered by both combatants in the war just concluded. Not a day passed in Linggi without someone having died of the most virulent form of influenza the world had ever experienced.

It was through sheer luck that none of my closest relatives was infected by the disease, although we were all scared to death of the possibility of catching it. It was pathetic that some of the most beautiful girls died of it. One of them was Nyonya, the eldest daughter of Pak Andak Ledok, the local *bomoh* and grave-digger. She was the belle of Linggi and was engaged to Yahya, the youngest son of ex-Penghulu Abu and the youngest brother of my aunt Rashidah's husband, Mohamed bin Abu.

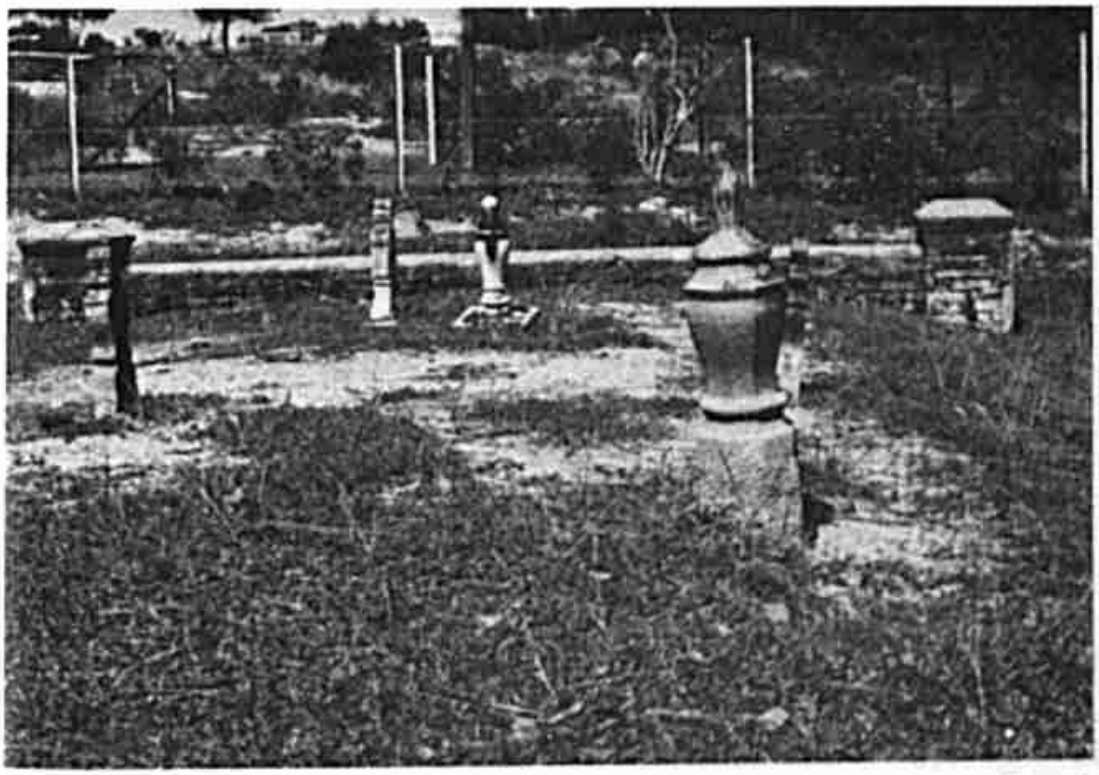
Tan Sri Datuk Dr Mohamad Said wearing the uniform and insignia of the Panglima Mangku Negara.

The house where I was born: a view from the north showing the *tengah rumah* and the kitchen.

Teratak Jasa, my cottage at 101, Gedong Lalang, Ampangan, Seremban.

The Linggi Mosque built by Dato' Muda Haji Mohd. Peral.

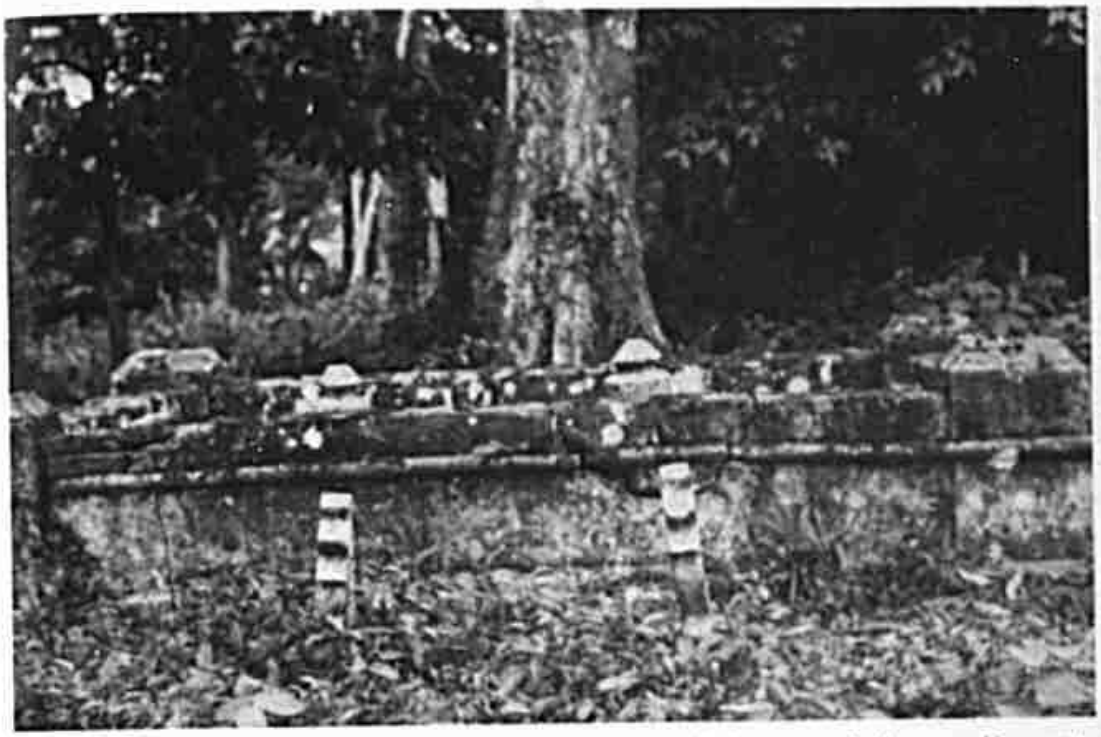
The *Mimbar* of the Linggi Mosque.



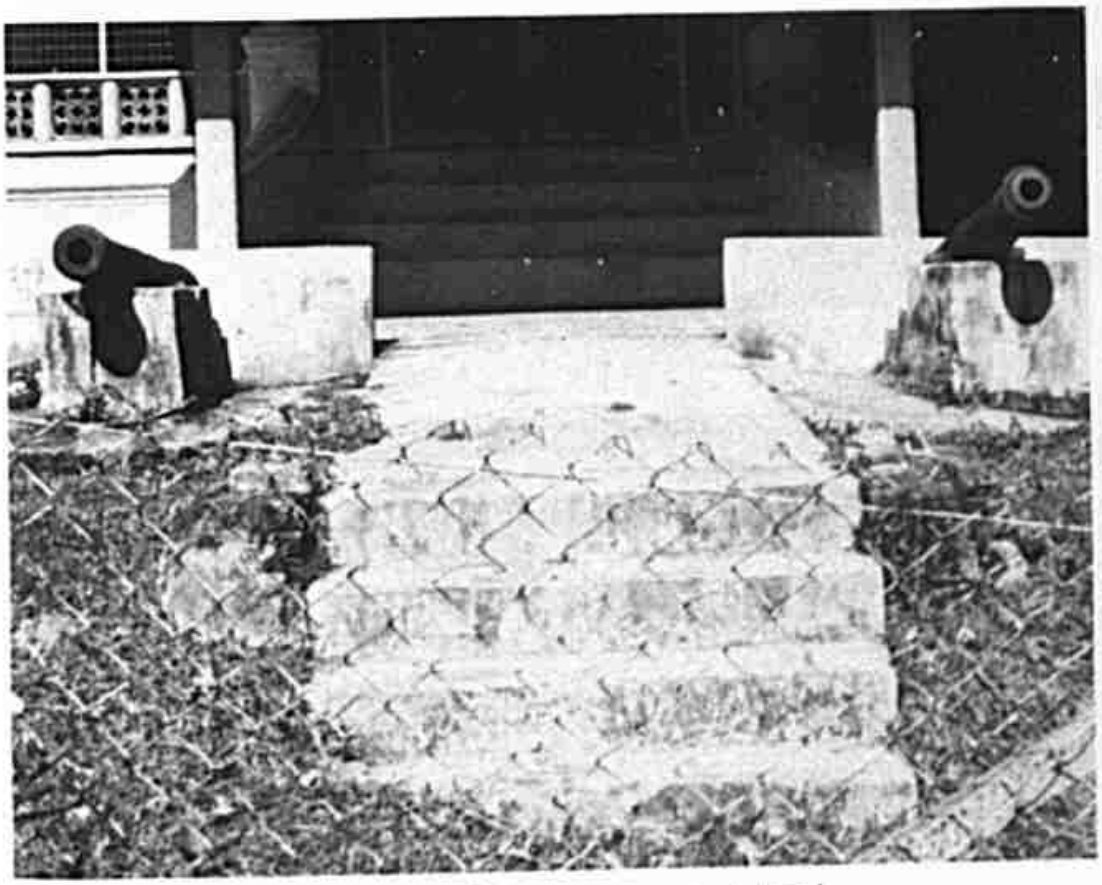
The burial ground in the compound of the Linggi Mosque where Dato' Muda Haji Mohd. Peral and five of his children were interred.

Keramat Sungai Undang (the tomb of Sheikh Ahmad Majanu, Pengkalan Kempas).

The megaliths at *Keramat Sungai Udang*, regarded by scholars as having no connection with the Keramat.



The tomb of Dato' Muda Haji Mohamed Salleh, regarded as a *Keramat* by the people of Linggi.



The two remaining cannons in Linggi.

The *Sekolah Kecil* or Preparatory (Prep.) School, Malay College, Kuala Kangsar (MCKK).

The *Sekolah Besar*, Malay College, Kuala Kangsar.

My uncle Mohamed bin Dato' Muda, the first editor of the *Majallah Guru*, a post which he held for eight years.

My uncle Ibrahim bin Dato' Muda Haji Mohamed Peral.

Za'ba (a photograph taken at Johore Bahru where he taught for two years at the English College).

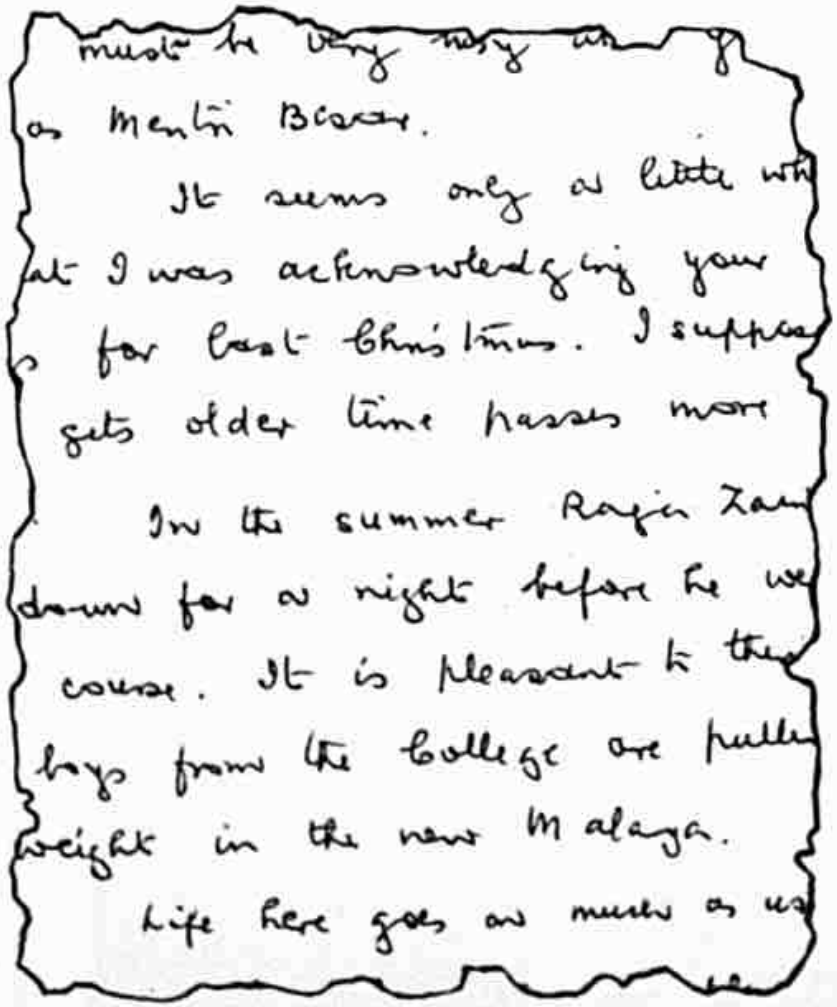
My uncle Ibrahim bin Dato' Muda Haji Mohd. Peral, Malay Master, S.I.T.C., Tanjung Malim.

Mr Charles Bazell, M.A. Oxon, Headmaster, Malay College, Kuala Kangsar (1923-1938).

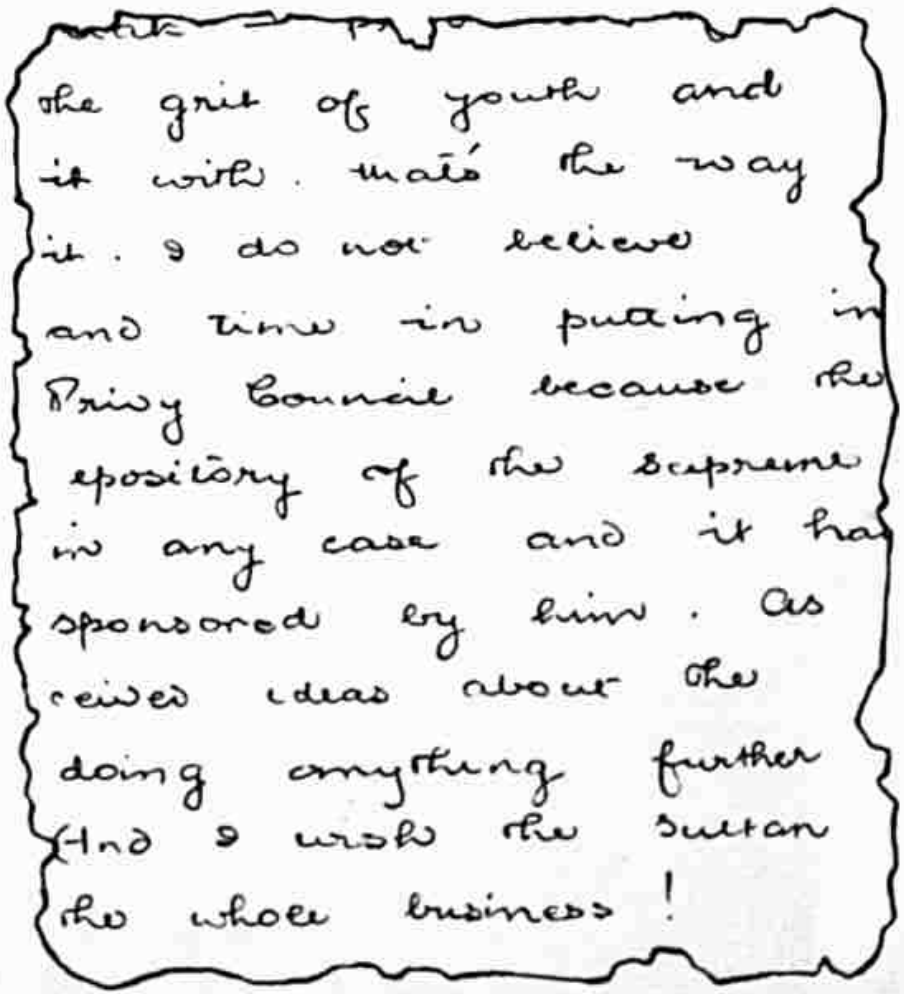
Captain Salleh bin Haji Sulaiman in the uniform of the Malayan Civil Service.

Mr Bazell with members of the Board of Prefects, 1930.

My last visit to Mr Bazell with my son Yusof, in August 1974. Mr Bazell was then 90 years old.


must be very busy as
as Martin Bacon.
It seems only a little wh
at I was acknowledging your
for last Christmas. I suppos
gets older time passes more
In the summer Rafia Zam
down for a night before he we
course. It is pleasant to the
boys from the College are pulli
weight in the new Malaya.
Life here goes on much as us

Mr. Bazell had a penchant for beautiful calligraphy and possessed a very fine handwriting himself as can be seen above.


the grit of youth and
it with. make the way
it. I do not believe
and time in putting in
Privy Council because the
epository of the supreme
in any case and it has
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ceived ideas about the
doing anything further
And I wish the Sultan
the whole business!

Mr. Bazell showed His Excellency, Sir Lawrence Guillemard a specimen of the handwriting of Megat Khas (above) as an example of beautifully clear penmanship.

Two great friends: Dato' Setia Raja Abdullah bin Haji Dalan, Undang of Rembau, and Incik Yusof bin Ahmad with their wives and the two children of Incik Yusof.

Chapter Three

Kuala Kangsar

I was enrolled as a pupil at the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar, at the end of the June 1919. Three of my cousins had preceded me in getting admitted to the College. They were, in order of their admission: Ahmad bin Haji Abdullah, Mohd. Salleh bin Haji Sulaiman and Syed Ahmad bin Syed Mohamed.

Ahmad bin Haji Abdullah, generally known in Linggi as Mat Lobak, was a son of my uncle Haji Abdullah. He had been adopted by my aunt Khadijah and her husband, Dato' Laksamana Abdul Majid, whose dove-snaring activities I have already narrated. I was very close to him during my childhood, looked upon him as my brother, called him *Abang* and more or less idolised him. My uncle Dato' Laksamana Abdul Majid loved him so much that he called him *"bujang"*, one of the common terms of endearment used by fond Malay parents, and, I am afraid, spoilt him by giving him too much pocket money. He was six years older than me and, having been admitted to the M.C.K.K. in 1914, was in the seventh standard when I enrolled.

He had done very well in the lower classes, and during the school vacations brought home prize-books for being either the first, second or the third boy in the annual examinations.

Of the other two cousins of mine, Mohd. Salleh bin Haji Sulaiman, was nicknamed Salleh Tikus by his classmates because he was the smallest boy among the new boys of his year. His diminutive figure was an asset to him for at every annual athletic meet he always won the sack race. He was quite good at his work and was a good football and hockey player. Lobak, however, was an even better footballer than Salleh and, playing right-half in the first match between Penang Free School and the M.C.K.K., he did so well that Captain Noor Mohd. Hashim, an old boy of Penang Free School and a supporter of the Penang team, heartily congratulated him at the end of the game, which M.C.K.K. won, two-nil.

Syed Ahmad bin Syed Mohamed, the son of my paternal aunt, Khadijah alias Halus binti Yusof, was the best scholar of the three. He wrote and spoke English very well and was one of the three boys of his class who won First Class Certificates in the Seventh Standard Examination of 1920.

It was on a Sunday when we arrived at Kuala Kangsar, so my cousin Ahmad Lobak first took me to the Big School where he and my two other cousins were boarded in one of the three dormitories on the top floor of the building.

When we reached the northern dormitory, my nose was immediately assailed by the horrible smell of vomited food and drink which littered the floor of the dormitory. There were chunks of a yellowish stuff with red rinds which, my cousin said, was a kind of foodstuff called *kiju* (i.e. cheese) which Europeans ate with bread or cream crackers.

I was told that on the previous night the European community of Kuala Kangsar, Ipoh and Taiping had been entertaining the officers of H.M.S. *Malaya,* which was making a courtesy visit to the Federated Malay States (which had donated the battleship to the British Government). This battleship was a unit in the British fleet under the command of Admiral Jellicoe which had engaged the German Fleet in the battle of Jutland in 1916.

Mr. Ball, one of the British assistant masters of the college, had played a leading role in organising the dinner and dance in honour of the officers of H.M.S. *Malaya.* As liquor was freely indulged in by hosts and guests and plenty of cheese and other foodstuffs were to be had in the intervals between dances, it was not to be wondered at that some of the company vomited all over the dormitory.

As the European men outnumbered the women, Totty and Vera, the two beautiful daughters of Mr. Velge, the Ceylon Burgher chief clerk at the Sultan's Office,had been invited by Mr. Ball to the dance and the colour bar had been suspended for the occasion.

For a boy who had been brought up in a puritanical household and who had recently been taught by Lebai Abass of Linggi that the drinking of all forms of alcohol, lumped together as *arak,* was one of the major sins, seeing and smelling for the first time the vomit of Europeans came as a great shock, and I was greatly relieved when my cousin led me to the *Sekolah Kecil* or Preparatory School situated about 200 yards away.

With regard to the battleship H.M.S. *Malaya*, previous to visiting Perak it had visited Negri Sembilan, where it anchored in the sea three miles from the Port Dickson wharf. I was lucky enough to be taken by Cikgu Yaacob on a visit to the battleship. The Yang di Pertuan Besar and the Ruling Chiefs and thousands of the people of Negri Sembilan were thus enabled to see for themselves what a great battleship was really like.

At the Prep. School, I was allotted an iron spring bedstead by the school monitor, Syed Sapi, a tall, dark and dour gangling youth of thirteen or fourteen. On it I deposited my mattress and a couple of pillows which I had brought from home and under it I pushed my steel trunk.

We next proceeded to the town of Kuala Kangsar to buy a pair of wooden clogs which were then used by College boys to go to the lavatory or the bathroom. Tan Kah Kee, the rubber magnate, had not then built his factory to manufacture rubber slippers in addition to other rubber goods and Bata was a name undreamt of by the people of Malaya.

We next adjourned to the Belakang Balai coffeeshop where we regaled ourselves with tea, bread and butter, *serikaya* and cakes.

Returning to the Prep. School, my cousin Ahmad Lobak left Yazid and me to fraternise with the new boys from other states. One of them was Osman bin Sharif of Jeram, Selangor. He was related to Yazid and me by marriage, as our mothers' cousin, Mohamed Kibai, who worked as a driver to the Sultan of Selangor had married his half-sister, Baghdad. Both he and Yazid were very homesick and started to wail inconsolably to the astonishment of the rest of us.

I did not follow their example because I was consoled by the fact that Ahmad Lobak, whom I regarded as a brother and whom I loved and idolised, was there, as well as two other cousins of mine, Mohd. Salleh bin Haji Sulaiman and Syed Ahmad bin Syed Mohamed.

Besides, my mother's parting admonition was still ringing in my ears, exhorting me to work hard and I was impatient to buckle down to learn English, while my uncle Ibrahim's reiterated "What man has done, man can do", acted as a spur to my ambition to do well at school.

Early the next morning my cousin Ahmad Lobak came to the Prep. School to fetch Yazid and me to be interviewed by the Act-

ing Headmaster.

Mr. Hargreaves, the first headmaster of the Malay College, who was reverenced by his pupils as a great teacher and headmaster, had retired several months before my admission to the College and Mr. J. O'May who had been his first assistant since the year 1908 had been appointed to act in his place.

An Irishman, he was a graduate of Oxford University whereas, paradoxical as it may seem, Mr. Hargreaves, an Englishman, was a Master of Arts of Dublin University. He had been described to me by my cousin Ahmad Lobak, who had been admitted to the College in 1914, as a tall commanding figure with an impressive gray moustache.

When, therefore, in fear and trembling I was ushered into the Acting Headmaster's office, I was surprised to be confronted by a rather short European of about thirty-four or so, the most conspicuous feature of whose clean-shaven face was an unduly prominent nose.

Having shaken my hand, he did not say a word to me nor asked me a single question, but in a rather mincing manner addressed his remarks to my cousin. Maybe he ignored me because he didn't like my nervous fidgetings or he considered all new boys as the meanest things that crawled.

In any case the so-called interview that did not happen was soon over and I emerged from the unprepossessing presence of the Acting Headmaster with mingled feelings of relief and humiliation.

The late Tuan Haji Abdul Majid bin Zainudin in his interesting unfinished autobiography *The Wandering Thoughts of a Dying Man* describes Mr. J. O'May as a fussy sort of man, and another old boy, Incik Abdul Majid bin Kari of Ampangan, Seremban, who was one of the first batch of boys to be admitted to the Malay Residential School, the precursor of the M.C.K.K., told me that he was not a good teacher as it was his habit to babble interminably on the subject he was teaching in class. In more picturesque language, he talked nineteen to the dozen.

Be that as it may, as an Acting Headmaster he was by no means much respected by the senior boys. This lack of respect has been ascribed by many old boys whom I have interviewed to several causes.

Some said he was too familiar with the boys, with the result

that, familiarity nearly always breeding contempt, he was not much respected by them.

Tuan Haji Abdul Majid, (who was later appointed a teacher at the College) not only described him, as already quoted, as a fussy man but also as a teacher who employed "the free and frequent use of abusive words" when he was annoyed with anybody's stupidity or lack of intelligence in answering his questions in class.

Thus it was that whenever he made the round of the dormitories after lights out at night, i.e., after 9.30 p.m., he was subjected to all kinds of practical jokes by the more mischievous among the older boys.

These pranks sometimes consisted in the squirting of black ink onto his white drill suit or the throwing of an old shoe at his retreating figure, whereupon he would return to investigate, muttering "*Sakai!*", in the sudden stillness of the dormitory.

And on the football field he was often teasingly tempted with a ball apparently within easy reach, only to be baulked of it by a player much faster than he was.

Despite all the teasings and practical jokes, however, it was fully expected that he would be confirmed as headmaster, as he had been Mr. Hargreaves's right-hand man for as long as ten years.

Much to everyone's surprise therefore, it soon became known that a new headmaster had been appointed. Contrary to the normal pratice, whereby the Secretary of State for the Colonies would appoint someone who was already a member of the Educational Service on the recommendation of the Director of Education, this time the appointment had been made directly by him. The Secretary of State for the Colonies had selected Mr. L.A.S. Jermyn, an assistant master at Trinity College, Glenalmond, a Scottish public school.

The news appeared to have a shattering effect on Mr. J. O'May. On being informed that a new headmaster had been appointed and that he would be arriving in Malaya within the next few weeks, he resigned from his post as an European master in the Education Service and, during the three months' period of notice, applied for the post of secretary to the Agency House of Harrisons and Barker Co. Ltd. at Kuala Lumpur, which was being advertised in the *Malay Mail*. His application was successful, but he had to stay on at the College to formally

hand over charge of it to Mr. Jermyn.

Mr Jermyn duly arrived at Kuala Kangsar accompanied by the frail and delicate-looking Mrs. Jermyn and their two-year-old son, Peter. Having taken over charge of the College from Mr. J. O'May, he had the whole school assembled in the Great Hall and in his speech paid a glowing tribute to Mr. J. O'May for his long and devoted service to the College. He then presented Mr. O'May with an inscribed ivory carving, towards the purchase of which the whole school and staff had subscribed.

In his farewell speech in response to Mr. Jermyn's, Mr. O'May was apparently unable to control his emotions and the tears flowed freely down his sunken cheeks. Many of the younger boys who had not had much contact with him wept silently in sympathy.

At the time none of the boys had the remotest idea as to why Mr. J. O'May had not been confirmed as headmaster. He was a graduate of Oxford University just as Mr. Jermyn was and had been the senior assistant master under Mr. Hargreaves for ten years and had the necessary experience in dealing with the sons and relatives of rulers and chiefs.

I now believe that one of the main reasons for his rejection had to do with his Irish nationality and the troublous political condition of Ireland following the 1916 uprising and its suppression by the Black and Tans.

However, Dr. Nordin Selat, in his thesis for the Ph.D. degree of the University of Malaya, avers that his rejection was due to the fact that he was a Fabian socialist like his great countryman, Bernard Shaw, who was an ardent supporter and leader of this particular brand of socialism.

His familiarity with the boys might have been a manifestation of his socialist leanings, but the most exhaustive enquiries from old boys of his time has failed to elicit any information as to whether or not he had ever talked about or even hinted at his political views. Surely it would have been sheer folly for him to do so to the sons and relatives of rulers and chiefs, who were the least likely persons to be won over to the cause of socialism of whatever tint. I am, therefore, inclined to discount his alleged Fabian socialism as the reason why he was not confirmed as the headmaster of the Malay College.

In retrospect, I also believe that, in what must have been the greatest disappointment of his life and the most devastating

blow to his self-esteem, he was consoled by the love of a woman. For during his Acting Headmastership, he had fallen in love with the lady Medical Officer-in-charge of the Women's Hospital, Kuala Kangsar. His love was reciprocated and he duly married her a few weeks before he was officially informed of the fact that he was not to be confirmed in his post as headmaster of the Malay College.

Incidently, the frequent spectacle of Mr. J. O'May kissing his newly-wedded wife on the open verandah of his bungalow provided vicarious excitement to several sex-starved senior boys, some of whom were already grown men.

My first impression of Mr. Jermyn when he visited us in class at the Prep. School a few days after his arrival was of a tall, handsome and distinguished-looking man of about thirty-four summers.

On closer observation, however, I was shocked to discover that he suffered from a number of physical disabilities. These physical defects, I found out later, were due to the ravages of polio with which he became infected during early adult life. They consisted of the paralysis and atrophy of the small muscles of his right hand which rendered it quite useless for the purpose of writing or grasping. Consequently he wrote with his left hand which made his handwriting not exactly of the copy-book kind.

In addition, the paralysis and atrophy of certain muscle groups in his left leg caused him to walk with a distinct limp, rendering his gait rather ungainly.

These physical handicaps appeared to have had an adverse psychological effect on this temper as I was to learn later, when he taught us English literature in the upper classes. For whenever a boy gave a specially stupid answer to his question, his temper was apt to be of the vitriolic kind. "You blithering idiot!" he would shout at the top of his voice.

They accounted, too, for his rather erratic headmastership, as evidenced, among other things, by his laxity in enforcing discipline which contrasted sharply with the severity of the punishment meted out by him in at least two particular instances.

However, as an appointee of the Secretary of State for the Colonies and as a practising poet whose poems appeared in four or five issues of the Glenalmond College magazine which he presented to the College library and in various Malayan periodicals, he was much admired and respected by the boys.

Besides, he was such a handsome and distinguished-looking man despite his physical defects, and he taught English so well and was so appreciative of good work done by the boys, that he was quite a popular headmaster.

As a new boy I was placed in the lowest form in the Prep. School and was accommodated in one of the two dormitories on the upper floor of the school.

Contrary to the practice in other schools, the lowest form in the Malay College of my time was known as Class Six, Form Two as Class Five and so on up to Class Two, equivalent to Standard Seven, the highest class in those days.

After passing the Standard Seven Government Examination for which a certificate, graded First and Second Class, was awarded, a boy either left school and sought employment in government service or, if selected, was placed in the Special Class for Malay Probationers, where he had to undergo three years of further education and training in order to fit him for entry into the Malay Administrative Service or M.A.S.

This service was a junior cadre of the administrative service of the country, the members of which were at first confined to Malays who had undergone three more years of further education and training in the Special Class for Malay Probationers at the Malay College.

The senior cadre of the administrative service was known as the Malayan Civil Service or in short, M.C.S. This service was manned by the scions of the English, Scottish and Irish middle classes, graduates of the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh and Dublin.

Admission to the M.C.S. was, however, grudgingly granted to a handful of M.A.S. officers after they had slogged for an unspecified number of years as factotums or bottle-washers for their British superiors, the M.C.S. officers.

The structure of classes elaborated above was retained at the Malay College for two further years after my admission, while other schools like the Penang Free School, the Victoria Institution, Kuala Lumpur, the Anderson School, Ipoh, the King Edward VII School, Taiping and the St. Paul's Institution, Seremban had progressed further and had, several years before the College, instituted changes which enabled their pupils to sit for the Junior and Senior Cambridge Examinations.

The last Standard Seven Government Examination was held

at the College in 1920. After that Class II, the former Standard Seven Class, was converted to Class IIB, the equivalent of the former Standard Seven, and two new classes added, i.e., Class IIA, the Junior Cambridge Class and Class I, the Senior Cambridge Class, the equivalents of Form IV and Form V in an English public school. The Government Standard Seven Examination was abolished and the boys had to sit the Junior Cambridge Examination for the first time in 1921 after they had completed an extra year of schooling.

Those who passed this examination were awarded the Junior Cambridge Certificate by the Cambridge Examination Syndicate, these certificates being graded into honours and ordinary pass certificates.

Having passed the Junior Cambridge Examination, a boy might elect to stay on in the Senior Cambridge class and at the end of another year sit the Senior Cambridge Examination or might leave school and enter government service, openings into which were then much greater in number and much easier to fill. The latter path usually resulted from the urgings of impatient or poor parents, anxious to share the fruits of their sons' earning capacities.

After passing the Senior Cambridge Examination a boy must perforce leave school, unless he was lucky enough to be selected as a Malay Probationer.

Selection to this much coveted distinction was not by means of an open competitive examination but by the much more uncertain and thorny means of an interview by a selection board presided over by the British Resident of Perak, the other members of which were the Headmaster of the College and a prominent Malay. In my time this was the Raja di Hilir, the celebrated Raja Sir Chulan bin Almarhum Sultan Abdullah, who was an influential member of the Board of Governors of the College.

In such an interview, the headmaster's confidential report on the candidate's character and conduct, including his academic record, the games he played, the books he had read and so on and so forth, was a very important, but by no means decisive factor in a candidate's chance of being selected. A candidate's family background was also closely scrutinized, preference being given to the sons of rulers and chiefs as a sort of sop to Cerberus.

A lot, too, depended upon the the kind of man the British Resident was who presided at the meeting of the selection board in the first place because in the course of his long service in the M.C.S., he had been in contact with many members of the M.A.S.

He might be the sort of person who preferred the docile, yes-man type of candidate, or one who gave undue importance to blue blood, or a *rara avis* type of British Resident who preferred a candidate with some backbone and who was not prepared to *kowtow* to his British superiors on every possible occasion.

After his selection as a Malay Probationer, the successful candidate had to stay for another year's education and training in the special class. The original three years' probationership had, by the introduction of the Junior and Senior Cambridge classes, been reduced to one year.

The Class Six (Form I) master at the Prep. School was Incik Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad, more popularly known by the acronym Za'ba, which he used as his pseudonym in the articles that he contributed to Malay newspapers and magazines. As his paternal grandfather and my maternal grandfather were cousins, he was a third cousin of mine or according to the English way of designating family relationship, my cousin thrice removed.

His father had hoped that he would be able to send him to Mecca to further his religious education with a view to eventually becoming a *kampung orang alim*. However, he revolted against his father's decision and got himself admitted to St. Paul's Institution, Seremban, and, in time, passed the Senior Cambridge Examination.

After four-and-a-half years of teaching at the Malay College, he was suspected of being anti-British by the Political Intelligence Section of the Police Department and was perforce bundled off, first to Kuala Lumpur in the office of Mr. A. Keir, the Acting Chief Inspector of Schools, S.S. and F.M.S., and afterwards to the Sultan Idris Training College to head the newly formed Translation Bureau, the brainchild of Mr. O.T. Dussek, the principal of the College.

The reason why he was transferred to Tanjong Malim was of course to prevent him from infecting his pupils at the Malay College with his political views and to neutralise him by making

him a translator rather than a writer of original articles, such as "The Poverty of the Malays" and its sequel "The Salvation of the Malays".

The textbook on English grammer used in Class Six was the one written by Cikgu Abdul Majid bin Haji Zainudin, who succeeded Za'ba as Malay master at the College.

He was later to write *Self-taught Malay* in the Marlborough series of self-taught publications dealing with the major languages of the world, as well as other books, among which the most notable were *Malayan Kaleidoscope*, *The Malays in Malaya by One of Them*, and last but no means least his very interesting but unfinished autobiography, *The Wandering Thoughts of a Dying Man*.

This English grammar book was good enough to enable all of us, whose knowledge of English did not extend beyond the two words "yes" and "no", to understand the basic structure of that language.

Calligraphy was one of the subjects to which great importance was attached and a whole hour was devoted by the class to the task of meticulously copying specimens of handwriting in the copy-books provided.

The reader used in Class Six was a textbook which, besides describing the boy Beng Kong flying his kite, had chapters on the *kelentongman*, the itinerant hawker who attracted the attention of his customers with his clapper and other inane stuff of that kind.

Apart from the three Rs and English, no other subjects were taught in Class Six. History and geography were not taught until we were in Class Three and Malay and Mathematics were taught only in the Junior and Senior Cambridge classes.

As there were no proper playing fields at the Prep. School, no organised games were played there. However, the boys played tops and marbles in the sandy ground in front of the school and, in the small open space at the back of the school, they played rounders or their five-or-six-a-side version of football, using a soft rubber ball instead of the real thing.

An improvised version of cricket was also played there, the boys using marbles as cricket balls, bamboo uprights as wickets and any old discarded pieces of plank as bats.

Contrary to Tun Raja Uda's experience, as told to Cheah Boon Kheng (*Straits Times* July 6, 1972) in the first of two articles about the Malay College, I had my first taste of bullying at

the Prep. School.

Even now I shudder to think what the school bully, a great big boy about two years older then I, might have done to me had it not been for the fact that the class master was known to be a relative of mine, to whom I could complain. Thus it was that I was spared greater indignities and suffered only painful nudges.

But his blood-curdling threats whenever I happened to meet him face to face and alone in the school corridors were sufficient to frighten me and make my life utterly miserable.

Years later when I was a young doctor in charge of the District Hospital, Pekan, Pahang, I met him at Kuala Lipis, then the state capital. The occasion was the inaugural meeting of the Malay Association of Pahang in the year 1939.

He was then serving as a clerk in the State Secretariat and had grown into a burly young man with the muscular development of a navvy. We eyed each other with mutual recognition. I was so forcibly reminded of how often he had bullied me at the Prep. School in 1919 and 1920 that I did not feel inclined to talk with him. For his part, he too must have felt a constraint induced by the memory of his past guilt.

The Prep. School monitor, by which name a College prefect was known in those days, was Syed Sapi, a grandson of the Selangor warrior, Syed Mashhor. Tall, dark and dour, he apparently did not inherit his grandfather's warlike qualities, as he failed to exert his authority over the bully, who terrorised the smaller boys with impunity.

In the meantime, Yazid's lachrymose reaction to the experience of having to live at a boarding school was brought under control by the arrival of his father in response to Za'ba's letter informing him of Yazid's tearful state. He stayed at Za'ba's house for a week, daily visited Yazid at the Prep. School and managed to pacify him.

For about a year Za'ba was allotted government quarters close to the Big School. Mr. H. Ball, who taught mathematics in Standard Seven and the special class, was allotted the spacious house next to the Prep. School.

From occasional glimpses I remember him as a rather short man of singular rotundity, who fitted his name to a T. But as far as I can recollect, he never even once visited the school. Maybe this was because it was then rumoured that he was car-

rying on a liaison with a notorious Kuala Kangsar courtesan, who was patronised by European bachelor planters in Kuala Kangsar and the neighbouring districts.

One anecdote of Mr. Ball tells how one day when he was teaching the Standard Seven boys, one of them had the temerity to stand up and ask him, "Sir, when do you think the Malays will be ready to be an independent nation?"

Mr. Ball was apparently taken aback by the unexpected question for he laughed incredulously and then answered, "Oh! I am afraid it will take a very long time for the Malays to achieve independence. In my opinion, it will take at least five hundred years." Subsequent events have proved Mr. Ball's prognostication erroneous by a rather wide margin.

I think it was the rumours of his entanglement with the courtesan and his flirtations with Mr. Velge's daughters, Totty and Vera, that induced Mr. J. O'May to recommend to the Director of Education that Mr. Ball should be transferred to another state as far away from Kuala Kangsar as possible. Thus it was that he was transferred to Malacca as Inspector of Schools.

The spacious government quarters vacated by him were then allotted to Za'ba. As close relatives of his, Yazid and I were quite often invited to his house to partake of *bubur kacang* (peanut soup), *pengat pisang* (fried bananas), *keledek* or *keladi* (sweet potatoes) or just for "tea and sympathy".

It happened that the gardener or *tukang kebun* who looked after the compounds of both the Prep. School and Za'ba quarters was a Javanese who had married a Tamil woman and by her had a son of about the same age as myself. His Tamil wife had died a couple of years before my admission to the College and he and his son lodged in the servant's quarters of Za'ba's house.

I befriended the son and visited him and his father quite often. Having been fascinated by so many *hikayat* and *syair*, I persuaded the father to tell me the story of Panji Semerang and other Javanese romances, of which I found him surprisingly knowledgeable. Za'ba had at the time only recently married his second wife Fatimah, generally called Putih and addressed by Yazid and me as Kak Putih.

About a year after my admission to the college his second daughter, Zahrah, was born. By his first wife, whom he had divorced at the behest of his father, he had already had one daughter, Raihanah.

His father, Pak Mat Kapar, was bitterly opposed to the step he had taken in opting to pursue his secondary education in English. His defiance of paternal authority was rendered doubly odious to his father because St. Paul's Institution was a Christian Brothers School, where the Gospel was taught as a compulsory subject. As a result of his disobedience, he was then disowned by his father and many years were to elapse before the old man finally relented and became reconciled to the *fait accompli*.

I buckled down to work hard in Class VI but was terribly disappointed when after six months in this class, Za'ba recommended to the Acting Headmaster, Mr. J. O'May, that my second cousin Yazid should be promoted to Class V. My friend Megat Khas and I were consequently left to stew in our own juices in Class VI.

Rightly or wrongly, I consider Yazid's promotion to Class V as evidence of the same sort of discrimination against me as had once before been practised by my uncle Ibrahim at the Linggi Malay School. In this case, rightly or wrongly I attribute the favouritism of Za'ba for Yazid to the fact that Za'ba had been a pupil of Yazid's father at the Linggi Malay School.

Megat Khas and I therefore resolved to work very hard and try our very best to catch up with Yazid.

Most of us, with the exception of a dunce, Meor Hassan, who, when asked to say in English "*Saya ada sebiji telur*" ("I have an egg"), without hesitation answered "I is a *telur*", had no difficulty in passing the annual examination. I managed to gain first place in the examination and won both the class and English prizes. Megat Khas came second.

We were promoted to Class V under Cikgu Hassan, who taught English very well. He prided himself on his accent and spoke the language with a distinct English twang.

In addition he was an amusing sort of teacher who delighted in making literal translations into English of idiomatic Malay expressions, as for instance "to eat wind" for "*makin angin*", "eat salary" for "*makan gaji*", "eat put in mouth" for "*makan suap*", "walk-walk only" for "*berjalan-jalan sahaja*".

Perhaps the most outrageous of his literal translations was "W.C. hen opium" for "*tahi ayam candu*".

Sometimes he would unmercifully tease us Negri Sembilan boys with his bizarre imitations of the Negri Sembilan (Minang-

kabau) dialect, for instance:

> "Nak dikatokan tolo imo, Indo yo botoloi" for "Hendak dikatakan telur harimau, tiada dia bertelur" and "Wahai Cik Siti, apolah mau samo doyan, mari kito naik keto korbor" for "Wahai Siti, apalah mahu sama saya, mari kita naik kereta kerbau".

Far from annoying us, these impromptu imitations of the Minangkabau way of speaking Malay current in Negri Sembilan, (with the exception of the administrative district of Port Dickson) only succeeded, by their very absurdity, in throwing the whole class into shrieks of laughter and I am afraid that on these occasions class discipline went by the board.

Despite these humorous interludes, Cikgu Hassan was a good teacher and my friend Megat Khas (the late Datuk Seri Dr. Megat Khas), Syed Jong of Tampin and I benefited so much from his teaching that after only three months in Class V, our daily work was considered by Cikgu Hassan as well above the average class performance and he recommended us to the headmaster for promotion to Class IV.

Mr. Jermyn sent down Mr. R.C.W. Rowlands, the Class IV master, to test us orally. I suppose that at the urging of Cikgu Hassan, he was already predisposed to promote us, for in spite of our nervousness in front of this new master, we passed the oral test tolerably well and were duly promoted.

One of my classmates in Class IV was the late Sultan Abu Bakar of Pahang. The late Sultan of Trengganu, (the fourth Yang di Pertuan Agong) who had joined the College with me, had left the school earlier.

The head monitor and football captain was the late Tengku Mohamed ibni Sultan Ahmad of Pahang, who was later appointed Tengku Panglima Prang and lastly a pre-merdeka Menteri Besar of Pahang.

In fact, at the Big School, there were then very many members of the royal families of the different states.

Besides Tengku Mohamed and his nephew, Tengku Abu Bakar, who later succeeded to the throne of Pahang, the state had sent to the College, Tengku Abdul Majid and Tengku Abdul Jalil, the two sons of the late Tengku Besar Sulaiman of Pahang.

As was to be expected, Perak royalty had the largest number of students at the College, many of them day boys because their

homes were nearby.

There were two sons and two grandsons of Sultan Abdullah, Raja Ahmad Tajudin and Raja Cik Jaafar, Raja Rastam Shahrome and Raja Hisham respectively.

Of the grandchildren of Sultan Idris of Perak there were Raja Aman, Raja Shahar, Raja Arif and later Raja Badri, Raja Hizan, Raja Hisan and Raja Soran, Raja Lope Rashid and Raja Ali.

From another branch of the family came Raja Yaacob, Raja Musa, Raja Yahaya and Raja Malek.

Selangor royalty was represented by Raja Bazid, Raja Jaafar alias Raja Bone, Raja Ahmad, Raja Abass and Raja Nong to be joined later by Raja Yusof, Raja Ayoub, Raja Zainal (now Tan Sri Raja Zainal) and Raja Hitam.

From Negri Sembilan came the late Tengku Nasir (Tengku Laksamana of Sri Menanti), son of Almarhum Tuanku Mohamed, Yang di Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan, Tengku Mustafa bin Tengku Besar Burhanudin, the former Datuk Paduka Maharaja Lela.

Of the sons of the Undangs of Negri Sembilan, there were Alwi and Khalid, sons of Datuk Klana Ma'mor of Sungai Ujong and Mohamed Idris and Mohamed Said, sons of the Undang of Johol.

Both Jelebu and Sungai Ujong were represented by boys who were destined to be elected Undangs: they were the late Undang of Jelebu, Shahmarudin and the present Datuk Klana Mohamed Kassim.

There was also a sprinkling of Syeds who, as descendants of the Holy Prophet Mohamed, then as now, were regarded as of equal rank with royalty.

The vast majority of the rest of the student body was composed of the sons and close relatives of the nobility and gentry of the Malaya of that time.

By nobility I mean the major and minor chiefs of the states of Malaya and by gentry Malay D.O.s, A.D.O.s and other high government officers who, not having blue blood in their veins, had risen up the social ladder by virtue of their education and character.

The sons of rulers were accommodated in special rooms or cubicles. There were five of these rooms sandwiched between the prayer room and one of the three dormitories. The rest of

the Tengkus, Rajas and Syeds, had to rough it out with the "lesser" breeds in the dormitories.

At meal times, the sons of rulers, Tengkus, Rajas and Syeds sat at a separate long table where they ate special food called First Class Diet.

Mr. R.C.W. Rowlands, the Class Four master, was a Ceylon Burgher, forty-seven years old, who had been an assistant master under Mr. Hargreaves from the start of the Malay Residential School.

He was a short and plump man, who habitually wore a closed coat and trousers of white drill, black leather boots and a white cocked hat, fashionable in those days.

He was said to have been educated at a college in Colombo, where the students were taught up to university level, and, if successful in the final examination, were awarded the diploma F.A., signifying Fellow of Arts.

In any case, he was a fine and versatile teacher who could teach well almost any subject and had at one time acted as headmaster of the King Edward VII School, Taiping.

Furthermore, his thirteen years' experience at Kuala Kangsar had made him familiar with the sensitivities in the psychological make-up of Malay boys, so that he knew exactly how to handle them. He was consequently very popular among the three generations of College boys who had been taught by him and there is not a single one of them who does not remember him with affection and gratitude.

He was particularly good at teaching English grammar and arithmetic and would present books from his own library to the students who did well in these subjects.

I remember that for scoring full marks in an arithmetic test, he gave me a little chemistry book written in everyday language. That was my first introduction to the fascinating world of science.

He was fond of cracking jokes in class, made all sorts of grimaces to illustrate his conceptions of certain historical or fictional characters at certain critical junctures of their lives and vocally demonstrated realistically how Lord Ullin wailed despairingly "My daughter! Oh! My daughter!" when she and her Highland lover were drowned in the ferry in their flight from the "angry father" that he was at the beginning of their elopement.

He did this so realistically, in fact, that this obscure poem by the poet Thomas Campbell has remained stamped on the tablet of my memory ever since.

Somehow he took a fancy to my second cousin Yazid (the late Captain Yazid) and me and when the time came for us to leave Class IV, he invited us to his quarters and presented to us some old books which he said he had used during his student days in Colombo. The two books which I got as my share were a volume of Lord Macaulay's literary and historical essays and a history of Ancient Greece. That volume of Macaulay's essays henceforth became one of the books which I read and re-read with unabated pleasure during the days of my youth.

We were promoted to Class III. It was in this class that the Headmaster took over the teaching of English language and literature. As a poet in his own right, he concentrated on English poetry and introduced us to the poems of William Allingham, Robert Louis Stevenson and Sir Henry Newbold in an anthology of verses suitable for adolescent boys.

He would recite these poems in class, beating out the rhythm on the table in front of him with his left fist and we boys would repeat the poems loudly after him until the whole school rang with our excited voices.

No doubt the neighbouring classes must have been distracted by the daily uproar in Class III.

It was in Class III that, as a boy of fourteen plus, I was persuaded to sit for the Butler-Wise Scholarship Examination. As the examination was open to boys of the upper classes regardless of age, I competed with many boys who were two or three years older than I was. I was therefore greatly surprised when about a month later I was told that I had won the scholarship.

It turned out that the main reason why I was able to beat my older competitors was that I had scored full marks in one of the four questions asked in the paper set by Dr. (later Sir) Richard Winstedt.

This particular question asked the candidates to give a list of ten well-known *hikayat* and *syair*. The question was indeed a godsend to me having regard to the numerous *hikayat* and *syair* that I had read in Linggi.

The Butler-Wise Scholarship Prize that year was the deluxe editions of Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Books together with the sum of fifty dollars as prize money. I won it again the following

year and was given Thomas Shelton's 1620 translation of the first part of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* with the prize money.

The scholarship was temporarily suspended during the two following years as the students of the newly created Junior and Senior Cambridge classes were preoccupied with the business of adjusting themselves to the requirements of the Cambridge Examination Syndicate.

What with the expanded curriculum and the nervous tension induced by the prospect of having to sit the examination for the first time, we had of necessity to keep our noses to the grindstone.

I was thus denied the opportunity of attempting the hat trick as far as the Butler-Wise Scholarship Examination was concerned.

However, I was amply compensated for this deprivation by the fact that, sitting for the Junior Cambridge Examination in December 1923, I passed it at the top of the class, gaining an Honours Certificate with distinctions in English Language and Literature, Malay, History and Geography.

My success in winning the Butler-Wise Scholarship Prize for two successive years, and in the following year getting the only Honours Certificate in the whole school, and last but by no means least, the somewhat fulsome eulogy showered upon me by Mr. Jermyn at the Annual Speech and Prize-giving Day, must have had the combined effect of turning my head and making me appear to others as an insufferable little prig.

This unconscious and unbecoming change in my demeanour, perhaps pardonable in a boy of fifteen plus flushed with success, did not fail to be noticed by my form master, Mr. L.R. Wheeler.

For in the Progress Report of me for the year 1924, which was sent to my uncle and guardian, the Dato' Laksamana of Linggi, he wrote as follows:

> One of the youngest in the class and a boy of great promise. He does not appear to me to be working so well as before, but is doing very well on the whole in the Senior class. Football greatly improved; may play tennis one day. Is inclined to think very well of himself at present.

Mr. Bazell's laconic report, however, did not allude to my cocky demeanour:

> A sound boy all round. Is distinctively good at his work and is coming on well at games.

With the introduction of the Cambridge Examinations during the headmastership of Mr. Jermyn, staff changes towards a degree of specialist teaching were instituted at his direction.

Cikgu Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad (Za'ba) and Cikgu Hassan, the Class VI and Class V masters, were withdrawn from the Prep. School.

The former was made to teach Malay in the two Cambridge Classes and the latter English in Class IV.

In their places two schoolmistresses, Miss Leith and Miss Griffith, were engaged. To help them maintain discipline, my cousin Mohamad Salleh bin Haji Sulaiman, (now Captain Haji Salleh, Datuk Panglima Lumut of Klang) a Malay Probationer, was appointed as special resident Prep. School monitor. Another mistress, Miss Dodds, was engaged to teach drawing and art in the upper classes.

In the place of the rotund, reserved and romantic Mr. Ball, who had been transferred to Malacca as Inspector of Schools, there appeared in rapid succession Mr. Beamish, Mr. Nagalinggam, Mr. Paul D. Chereith and Mr. E. de la M. Stowell.

Mr. Beamish was a tall, hefty Englishman of about forty who always appeared in class in a white drill closed jacket and trousers, his face suffused and his breath redolent of the strong smell of liquor.

I am not, however, suggesting that he ever appeared in class in a state of inebriation. As a matter of fact, despite his addiction to alcohol, he was always as sober as a judge whenever he appeared in class.

I remember very distinctly that whenever he stood up to go to the blackboard to write on it, the seat of his trousers was nearly always stained with blood.

It is probable therefore that he was suffering from haemorrhoids or piles and that he took to drinking in order to alleviate the pain and discomfort of this dreadful disease. In any case, he was a kind teacher who was much liked by the boys. I remember that he was very meticulous in teaching us how to pronounce English words. For example, he taught us how to pronounce the words "kitten", "eaten" and "mutton" in the sentence "The kitten had eaten the mutton", and also the words "mignonette" and "nasturtium" in the Class III reader.

Before long he was transferred to Malacca as Acting Headmaster of the High School there. He was replaced by Mr. Paul

D. Chereith, a Malayalee graduate of an Indian University.

Good-looking, mild-mannered and wearing blue-tinted glasses, he was a good teacher who taught history in Class Three from a finely-illustrated textbook, *From Long Ago to Nowadays*. However, it was not a "long-ago-to-nowadays" history textbook about Malaya, but about England.

One passage from this book that he read out to the class in his distinctive Indian style and accent has remained lodged in my memory to this day: "In 597, the Pope of Rome sent Augustin and forty other monks to convert the English to Christianity". I remember that he laid special stress on the word "other", pronouncing it as though it were spelt "otherer".

Despite his good teaching methods and his popularity with the boys, he was destined to be transferred elsewhere after about a year at the College.

Mr. Nagalinggam was a shadowy figure who one day mysteriously appeared on the College scene and about two months later mysteriously disappeared from it.

He was a tall, thin and taciturn Tamil of about forty years of age who taught us to multiply long rows of figures by a new method which invariably led to the correct answer in a fraction of the time it took to multiply them in the usual way.

The strange thing about him was that he made frequent visits to the lavatory. With the hindsight of a doctor I now think that he was a very sick man and that he suffered from either tropical sprue or some form of colitis.

After the transfer of Mr. Paul D. Chereith, Mr. Edgar de la Motte Stowell arrived at the College to take his place. He was a scholar of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge and an honours history graduate.

A good-looking young man of twenty-eight and of medium height, he was as his name indicated, probably of mixed French and English extraction. In addition he was a man of spare build and he wore very thick glasses.

He was a superb history teacher and during Mr. Jermyn's absence on casual leave, taught English as well in Class III. Following in the footsteps of Mr. Jermyn, and probably by his express instruction, he, too, concentrated on English poetry during the one month that Mr. Jermyn was away. I remember that one of the poems that he made us learn was entitled *The Abbot of Aberbrothock*. Incidentally, I have never come across this poem in

any of the anthologies of English poetry that I have since consulted.

His method of finding out whether we had memorised the poem properly was to line the whole class in a row and ask the boy at the top of the line to recite the poem. Should he fail to recite the first stanza of the poem, he was relegated to the second place, and the second boy who had thus been promoted to the first place was then asked to recite the poem. Should he succeed in reciting the first stanza he kept his position at the top of the line and the boy who had been demoted to the second place was next asked to recite the second stanza. Should he fail to do so the third boy was next asked the same question. In case he was able to recite the second stanza correctly he would be promoted to the second place in the line and the second boy relegated to third place. It happened that I had memorised the poem so well that at the conclusion of the lesson, I was able to reach the top of the line.

In addition to his teaching duties, he was entrusted by the headmaster with the task of editing the *Malay College Magazine* which was started soon after his arrival. Mustafa Albakri (the late Dato' Mustafa Albakri) was appointed sub-editor to help him run the magazine and solicit articles from likely contributors.

In the very first number of the magazine, Mr. Jermyn contributed a poem, which was one of the poems he had written since his arrival in Malaya and had had published in various periodicals.

The first twelve lines of the poem, which I remember quite well, ran as follows:

A Poem inspired by a Chinese Vase – *after Theophile Gautier*

I do not love thee lady,
Nor Juliet, nor Kate O'Grady,
My love – she dwells afar
By the Yellow River,
Where the cormorants are;
Her eyes slant up, hollow your hand –
Her small foot fills the cup,
Her lips are redder than carmine,
Her body lithe as the clinging eglantine;
By the vine trellis there,
Passing swallows touch her hair.

In the same number of the magazine, Abdullah bin Haji Dahan, the future Undang of Rembau wrote an article entitled "Farewell to the Alma Mater" which was so well written that it won the unstinted praise of all members of the staff.

Sometime later a Malay magazine call *Semaian*, with Za'ba as editor and myself as sub-editor, was started. In the first number of the magazine, I wrote an article describing the discovery in 1922 of the tomb of the young Pharaoh Tutankhamen in the Valley of Kings, Luxor, Egypt, by the British archaeologist, Howard Caxter with the financial backing of Lord Carnavon.

It was no more than a rehash of an article about the discovery that I had read in *The Illustrated London News*. But it excited the interest of the late Tengku Besar Burhanudin of Sri Menanti, who congratulated me on it when I met him later at the Seremban railway station. Tengku Besar Burhanudin was, of course, a keen student of Arabic and knew that one of the Pharaohs had persecuted the Prophet Moses and his people and pursued them in their flight out of Egypt until the parting of the waters of the Red Sea enabled Moses and his followers to escape from his fell clutches, drowning the Pharaohs and the Egyptian forces when the Red Sea reverted to its former state.

The really original article in the first number of the *Semaian*, however, was the one written by my cousin Yazid. It described the incidents of a day in a fictitious *kampung* so realistically and humorously that he was likened to a budding Charles Dickens.

For the second number of the magazine, Za'ba made four of us translate the articles in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* dealing with the four *imam* of the four orthodox Muslim sects.

I was assigned to translate the article on *Imam* Malik ibn Anas and Yazid that on *Imam* Shafii. I do not remember who were the translators of the articles on *Imam* Abu Hanifah and *Imam* Ahmad ibni Hanbal.

At about the same time as Mr. Stowell, Captain Rooke-Cowell joined the staff and was entrusted by the headmaster with the task of starting the teaching of science at the College.

Already well past middle age, probably at least fifty years old, he was a retired officer of the British army who, earlier in his career, had joined the French Foreign Legion and served for a number of years. He finally joined up in the British army at the outbreak of the First World War and served until the

end of the war.

His experiences as a legionnaire and as a British army officer during the interminable trench warfare of the First World War, accounted perhaps for his rather battered appearance.

He was accompanied by Mrs. Rooke-Cowell and his ward, Miss Alice.

The former was an extraordinarily tall and buxom young woman of about twenty-five or so, whose beautiful face wore a gentle and kindly expression.

Miss Alice was a young girl of nineteen who also displayed a figure of generous proportions, but was not so tall and buxom nor so beautiful as Mrs. Rooke-Cowell. Her youth and animated expression, however, made her quite pretty to look at.

Besides being middle-aged and battered-looking, Captain Rooke-Cowell was untidy in his dress. In class and in the laboratory, he usually wore baggy khaki trousers and a white jacket, much stained with tobacco ash. He was practically never seen in class and laboratory without his pipe, at which he contentedly puffed away between snatches of formal teaching in class, or as he paced the laboratory floor, supervising the boys at their chemistry experiments.

He was a good amateur carpenter, a skill he had acquired as a legionnaire, and having persuaded the headmaster to buy the necessary tools, taught the boys to make test-tube racks and other items of laboratory equipment so that much of the original equipment of the lab was made by the boys themselves.

For the Senior Cambridge Chemistry class, he appointed Mustafa Albakri and Mokhtar bin Datuk Penggawa of Selangor as class demonstrators and my cousin Yazid, Megat Khas and I were appointed demonstrators for the Junior Cambridge Class.

One day, however, Captain Rooke-Cowell caught me red-handed reading Walter Scott's novel *The Betrothed* in the lab and I was ignominiously demoted from my demonstratorship. It was only when Mr. L.R. Wheeler took over the teaching of chemistry that I was reappointed class demonstrator.

Miss Alice was quite a good pianist and was much in demand at school concerts, where she played the piano and sang the popular songs of those days such as "It's a Long Way to Tipperary", "Clementine", "The Sailor", "Johnny Get Your Gun", etc.

Mr. Stowell was frequently seen visiting Captain Rooke-

Cowell's quarters and there was some speculation about the possibility of his being in love with Miss Alice, which the boys thought would have been the best possible match for Miss Alice and one that would have been blessed by the Rooke-Cowells.

However, "the best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley", as the poet Robert Burns said and it turned out that she favoured a young planter with whom she eloped in the end, much to the consternation and grief of the Rooke-Cowells.

The scandal of the elopement and the shame and humiliation of it caused Captain Rooke-Cowell to resign his post as science master and exile himself to Kelantan, where he obtained a job with the Duff Development Company.

As for Mr. Stowell, he did not appear to be visibly affected by Miss Alice's elopement and the boys came to the conclusion that he was never really in love with Miss Alice but had been visiting the Rooke-Cowells merely for social reasons.

Mr. Stowell was given the quarters vacated by Za'ba and it was part of his duties to see to it that Prep. School boys refrained from mischief-making. He was authorised by the headmaster to cane any boy who was guilty of a breach of discipline or committed any act derogatory to the reputation of an aristocratic school such as the M.C.K.K. then was. Whenever he had to do so, he usually flagellated the boy's bottom, before doing so exhorting the guilty boy to *"menahanlah"*, obviously assuming that the word was the proper idiomatic Malay word for "be ready to receive your punishment".

Mr. Stowell excelled as an equestrian, Sultan Iskandar allowing him to ride one of his polo ponies almost every morning. Apart from horse-riding he did not play any games, his poor eyesight preventing him from taking off his very thick spectacles which would have been necessary were he to play football or hockey.

Mr. Jermyn taught English Language and Literature in Class III, Class II and the two Cambridge classes.

I have described how he taught us English poetry in Class III using an anthology of poems suitable for adolescent boys. In this class, he concentrated mainly on sound and rhythm and did not concern himself with metre and the finer points of prosody.

In Class IIB and the Cambridge classes, we were introduced for the first time to the plays of Shakespeare: the historical play

Henry V for both Class IIB and the Junior Cambridge Class, and *Julius Caesar* for the Senior Cambridge.

After explaining the metre of Shakespeare's blank verse, the iambic pentameter, he would deal with the variations of this metre in the form of the spondee, trochee, anapaest and the dactyl and taught us to scan the lines of *Henry V* and to recognise where these variations occurred.

He explained that an iambic foot consists of a short unstressed syllable followed by a long stressed one; a spondee, a foot of two long syllables; a trochee, a foot of one long syllable followed by a short one; an anapaest, a foot of two short syllables followed by a long one; and lastly a dactyl, a foot of three syllables, one long followed by two short ones.

He showed us examples in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, in which poems had been written with each line consisting of three or four feet. In the Cambridge classes he launched into a learned talk on poems written in English, each line of which consisted of six iambic feet and said these verses were called alexandrines.

He also dealt with the classification of English poetry into the lyrical, the narrative, the sonnet, the ode, the elegiac, the epic and the dramatic and so on and so forth citing examples whenever possible from Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*.

In short, his teaching of English poetry was more like the lectures of a professor or lecturer in the Department of English Language and Literature to undergraduates in the faculty of arts of a university than to schoolboys in a secondary school or college.

While much of this teaching on English prosody, poetic diction and the classification of English poetry was caviar to the general, it did instil in some of us an early understanding of the different metres employed by English poets and an appreciation of the rich variety of English poetry.

In a very few, it has meant much more than that: a deep and abiding interest in English poetry was implanted early in their young and impressionable minds and in the subsequent trials and tribulations of their lives it was in the works of the major English poets that they often sought solace and sustenance.

Incidently, it has also made them wonder at the current craze for, and obsession with, the *sajak* form of free verse, which appears to hold in its thrall our budding Malay poets.

It is regrettable that the Muse of poetry has not so far inspired them to emulate the English poets and attempt to write the more objective or descriptive types of poetry instead of subjectively bewailing the sad plight of the *kampung* people sunk in dire poverty, or addressing doleful dirges to their dead mothers, or despairing of the apparent indifference of the girls they love in their passionate love letters.

As it is, *sajak* poems galore appear with monotonous regularity in Sunday newspapers and magazines and one looks in vain for poems of the type, say, of Shelley's "Ode to the Skylark", or Grey's "Elegy written in a Country Church Yard", let alone longer narrative poems like Byron's "Childe Harold" or Matthew Arnold's "Scholar Gypsy".

Not long after Captain Rooke-Cowell's resignation, the scholarly Mr. Stowell was transferred to Johore Bahru as acting headmaster of the English College there.

Mr. C. Bazell, an assistant master at the Raffles Institution, Singapore, was transferred to Kuala Kangsar to take his place.

He was a tall, dark, Latin-looking man of thirty-seven years of age, whose appearance contrasted sharply with the fair Mr. Stowell. Indeed, his jet black hair and moustache and dead white skin made him quite different from all other European masters who had taught at the M.C.K.K.

He had had a three-year spell of teaching as an assistant master at the Raffles Institution, Singapore, from 16 June 1914 to 10 June 1917 when he resigned his teaching post to join as a partner in a broker's firm.

He was a broker from June 1917 to May 1922, which means he was a businessman for nearly five years. The failure of his business due to the slump of the twenties caused him to rejoin Raffles Institution as an assistant master. On 1 June 1922, he was transferred to the M.C.K.K. as assistant master under Mr. Jermyn.

He and the headmaster had been undergraduates together at Keble College, Oxford. I remember him telling me that on account of its modern red-brick appearance the college was facetiously nicknamed "The Streaky Bacon".

One starry night while I was wandering forlornly on the playing field, he met me on his way back from the Prep. School and asked me what I was doing. I said that I was feeling dejected for

a reason that I could not tell him. I added that I would like to leave the college and go to Singapore to read medicine at the King Edward VII College of Medicine.

He said that as I was then only half-way through my studies in the Senior Cambridge Class, it was not possible for me to gain admission to the medical school as it was essential for me to pass the Senior Cambridge Examination with credits in English, Mathematics and three other subjects.

He said that the cause of my depression must be psychological. It was then that he told me he knew as much about the mind as a doctor did about the body. He added that he had narrowly missed a First in the Greats because in his final year he had attended Professor McDougall's lectures in psychology so assiduously that he had less attention to give to classical studies.

He said he could soon cure me of my depression, if I were willing to confide in him the reason for it. He added that when he was teaching in Singapore, he had often helped a doctor friend of his by treating those of his patients who suffered from neurotic ailments by psychoanalysing them. Occasionally, he had even hypnotised the more intractable cases of psycho-neurosis or hysteria, thereby bringing to the surface and resolving their repressed complexes.

But I was too shy and diffident a boy to confide in him. Instead, I dissembled my feeling of dejection by pretending to be quite cheerful whenever Mr. Bazell taught English and History in class, or whenever I met him outside in the College corridors or the library.

As a teacher he was truly outstanding. In fact, he was in my opinion, the best teacher who ever taught me at the Malay College. I remember that most of us in the Junior Cambridge class were stumped when we were given questions on stocks and shares to answer in Arithmetic. We sought Mr. Bazell's aid in answering these questions. In next to no time he explained what "at par", "above par" and "below par" meant and provided us with cyclostyled notes, giving examples of questions and answers involving these hitherto puzzling phrases. No doubt his previous five years' experience as a stock-broker in Singapore made such questions mere child's play to him.

Tun Abdul Razak used to remark of Mr. Bazell that he spoon-fed his pupils. With due respect to the late lamented Tun,

I disagree. It was indeed obvious to us all that he was specially transferred to the M.C.K.K. from Singapore's premier school, Raffles Institution, because of his excellence as a teacher and his sterling character as a man.

Good as Mr. Jermyn was at teaching English Language and Literature, Mr. Bazell outshone him, as evidenced by the better results achieved in the Cambridge Examinations after he had taken over the teaching of the subjects in mid-1922.

As soon as he started teaching the two subjects, he replaced Nestfield's *English Grammar*, which had been used as a grammar textbook for umpteen years, with West's *English Grammar* which was undoubtedly a better textbook than Nestfield's.

It is sad to recall that at this stage Mr. Jermyn committed the blunder that was to cost him the headship of the College. His signal folly consisted of refusing to grant his permission for the boys of the Big School to go for a *Mandi Safar* at the Kangsar River.

The boys, under the leadership of Ngah Ghaffar, the head monitor, thought the refusal nothing short of sacrilegious, as the *Mandi Safar* was regarded by them as a kind of sacred ritual to be unfailingly observed on the last Wednesday of the Muslim month of *Safar*. Its observance was believed by Malays to be a sure guarantee against dangerous accidents for the remaining months of the Muslim calendar.

They therefore decided to defy the headmaster and proceeded to the Kangsar River for the ritual *Safar* bath. Their defiance resulted in the mid-1922 "strike" of the boys of the Big School.

It happened that one particular senior boy, a monitor I think he was too, did not join in the strike and sneaked to the headmaster and told him who the ringleaders of the strike were.

On our return from the *Mandi Safar*, in a historic confrontation in one of the classrooms, this boy was denounced as a traitor and a sneak by Abdullah bin Haji Dahan, monitor and future Undang of Rembau.

"You cut-throat!" shouted the future Undang.

"Monteiro! Bring knife!" shouted back the renegade.

"Hang you!" shouted the future Undang.

"Monteiro! Bring rope!" shouted back the sneak.

Monteiro was the college steward.

If I remember rightly, the headmaster reported the matter to the British Resident of Perak, who was the chairman of the

Board of Governors of the College. His report led to an inquiry by the Board of Governors and it was decided to get Mr. Jermyn transferred to Northam Road English School, Penang, as headmaster.

While the inquiry was being held, however, the school term had come to a close and we did not know of the decision of the Board of Governors until, on our return to the College at the end of the school vacation, we found Mr. Jermyn already transferred to Penang and Mr. Bazell appointed headmaster in his place.

In retrospect, I can testify to the popularity of Mr. Jermyn among the boys until his injudicious attempt to stop the boys of the Big School from observing the pseudo-religious custom of *Mandi Safar* caused the school strike.

As a direct nominee of the Secretary of State of the Colonies from his old school, Trinity College, Glenalmond, a Scottish public school, where he had been an assistant master, he was, at the beginning of his headmastership at the Malay College, much respected by the boys.

This respect was enhanced by his growing reputation as a poet, for, during the three years he was headmaster of the College, he continued to contribute his poems to various Malayan periodicals. I remember that two of his poems which were considered especially good by the other European masters were "The Bells of Bruges" and "The Buffalo".

I used to make cuttings of Mr. Jermyn's poems even after I had been admitted to the King Edward VII College of Medicine, for his demotion did not seem to diminish his poetic fervour and his poems continued to adorn the pages of various periodicals. I regret that in the course of a long life these cuttings have been irretrievably lost.

When later on, he was transferred to Batu Pahat, as headmaster of the Government English School there, my friend Megat Khas and I met him once near the Mohamed Dulfakir Bookshop. He recognised us at once, stopped his chauffeur driven car and asked us how we were getting on with our medical studies. After we had told him how gruelling they were, we had a long chat by the side of the road. He was as cheerful as he always was in the good old days at the Malay College.

On another occasion, while we were on our way back from seeing a *bangsawan* performance at the City Opera at an amuse-

ment park at Jalan Besar, Singapore, we saw him striding along, with arms akimbo, and looking up at the starry sky right in the middle of Bras Basah Road, seemingly oblivious to all manner of traffic.

As he appeared to be absorbed in waiting for "the spark from Heaven" to fall on his poetic soul, Megat Khas and I decided not to interrupt his communion with the Muse of poetry and told our rickshaw puller to steer clear of our quondam headmaster. For his part, he did not appear to be distracted by the passing of our rickshaw so near him.

Soon afterwards, there appeared in the pages of the *Malaya Tribune* several articles by him, describing his adventures as a crocodile hunter. It appeared from these articles that, despite the relative uselessness of his right hand, he had made himself quite a good shot and that he could use a rifle quite efficiently in shooting crocodiles which abounded in the Batu Pahat River.

He had also apparently mastered the twin arts of curing crocodile skins and of making purses, handbags and belts of crocodile leather. One of these articles recommended a fried crocodile egg as more than sufficient for one man's breakfast and that crocodile flesh made quite a succulent steak.

To revert to his headmastership of the Malay College, it was due to him that the teaching of Chemistry as a science subject was started there.

He also engaged a Filipino music teacher, Mr. Bartholomeo, to teach the boys music. Thus the nucleus of a school band was formed, the members of which were all senior boys, among them, Mustafa Albakri, playing the violin, and my cousin Salleh, blowing the clarinet. As all the musical instruments were monopolised by the senior boys, we youngsters did not progress beyond "do, re, me, fa, so, la, ti, do".

Mr. Jermyn also introduced the house system that is one of the features of a British public school. Three houses were organised, called "Heads" after the Headmaster, "Rookies" after Captain Rooke-Cowell and "Wheels" after Mr. Wheeler.

He also engaged a retired Sikh police sergeant, called Bir Singh, to drill all boys who were not playing games in the evening.

Despite all these achievements, however, from another point of view, Mr. Jermyn's transfer from the College was timely. For

school discipline was deteriorating and getting extraordinarily lax.

It all started with the arrival at Kuala Kangsar of the celebrated traveller and author, Lowell Thomas, some time in 1922.

He had been a war correspondent in the Middle East during the Great War (now referred to as the First World War) and had taken numerous photographs depicting the daring exploits of Col. T.E. Lawrence and his Arab guerillas against the Turkish forces in Arabia.

The interest of the European community in Kuala Kangsar as well as of Sultan Iskandar and members of the Perak royal family was aroused with the result that the Mangala Hall, a ramshackle building close to the market, was hired by them to enable Mr. Lowell Thomas to exhibit his war photographs.

These dramatic photographs of actual guerilla warfare in the desert of Arabia, together with Mr. Thomas's running commentary, were most interesting and the members of the College staff were among the appreciative audience who saw the first screening at the hall.

The next day the headmaster arranged for a re-screening of these wartime photographs with Mr. Lowell Thomas again providing the running commentary. The whole school formed the audience on this occasion and the boys enjoyed the show greatly.

Unfortunately, however, after Mr. Thomas had left Kuala Kangsar to exhibit his photographs in the bigger Malayan towns, Maliveram, the *chettiar* owner of the theatre, decided to hire American films to be shown to the public.

The College boys, their appetite for shows having been whetted by Mr. Lowell Thomas's pictures, began to be fascinated by the fictitious exploits of Ruth Roland and her lover in the *Tiger's Trail*.

This silent picture was actually the first one shown in Kuala Kangsar in those days and Mr. Jermyn readily gave permission for droves of boys from the Big School to see the picture. As the *Tiger's Trail* was a serial running for several weeks, there was not a week when the Mangala Hall was not half-full of schoolboys, avid cinema-goers from the Big School.

The serial parts of this film were shown at weekly intervals. In between the weekly instalments of this picture, other pictures

were shown and the boys had only to ask the headmaster to be given permission to see them.

As a result a great deal of sleep was lost because these pictures generally ended at about midnight. A further fifteen to twenty minutes were spent in walking back to college plus a further half-an-hour, perhaps, in gloating over mental images of the beautiful faces and voluptuous figures of Ruth Roland and Pearl White, or vicariously repeating in imagination Eddie Polo's fantastic feats of fisticuffs.

It was not to be wondered at that their work and health were adversely affected by these late nights and by repressed sexual excitements and imaginings.

Mr. Bazell put a stop to all this when he succeeded Mr. Jermyn as headmaster of M.C.K.K. For, besides being a masterly teacher of English and History, he was a strict disciplinarian. Mild enough during teaching sessions, he was quite stern and unbending whenever the occasion demanded a display of firmness.

The first thing that he did on assumption of office as headmaster was to muster the whole school in the Great Hall and in his address to them, said it was very important that they should behave with decorum and exercise self-control at all times.

On the subject of smoking, he asked how it was possible for those of them who might he addicted to it to be under the control of three inches of tobacco wrapped with a piece of paper.

Before that, although smoking was forbidden, this rule was more honoured in the breach than the observance, and anyone going to the lavatory to answer the call of nature could see a number of senior boys standing in a row puffing away at their cigarettes, while apparently absorbed in reading their textbooks. The worst part of the clandestine smoking sessions was that the habitues of the lavatory as a smoking room included monitors like Abdullah bin Haji Dahan and the gentle and pious Syed Nordin.

They generally stood in a row outside the actual latrines, while the younger addicts sought the refuge of these rooms, in which we locked ourselves to seek consolation in the arms of Lady Nicotine.

It must be remembered that those were the days of the bucket system of night-soil disposal so it may be readily imagined what a malodorous place the lavatory was and still

more so the separate latrines.

I do not think a single septic tank had been installed outside any building, large or small, in the Kuala Kangsar of those days, so that the flush system of night-soil disposal was undreamed of. Hence night-soil bullock-carts were a common sight very early in the morning, carrying pails of excrement to trenching grounds on the outskirts of Kuala Kangsar. In order to diminish the horrible smell, the bullock-cart drivers and their assistants used to burn coconut coir in burners placed in the middle of these carts. As some of the pails were filled to the brim, it was inevitable that some of their contents were spilt on the public roads, and while walking to the town, we had to be very careful not to tread on these spillings.

That was in Mr. Jermyn's time. After Mr. Bazell's harangue, the lavatory was no longer used as a smoking room. As to what happened afterwards, I am fairly certain that the addiction to tobacco did not cease abruptly but continued to be indulged in surreptitiously either in the privacy of the latrines or in the coffeeshops in town.

Mr. Bazell was not only a strict disciplinarian when dealing with us schoolboys, but he was also equally strict with the masters under him. I remember when, after the morning break one day, the bell had been rung for the resumption of teaching in class, three masters were still loitering in the Great Hall and chatting among themselves. They were the new European master, Mr. Carey, a Cambridge graduate, who had replaced Mr. R.P.S. Walker (who had gone home on full-pay leave), Mr. R.C.W. Rowlands and Incik Ahmad Jalaludin.

The headmaster's office being situated next door to the Great Hall, Mr. Bazell must have heard the sound of their voices, for he suddenly appeared at the door of the Great Hall and without saying a word but with a stern face, he waved his hands as if to say "Vamoose!", and the three loiterers did so.

Another instance of Mr. Bazell's strictness in enforcing discipline was when one of his brightest pupils in the Senior Cambridge class, in a fit of temper, struck Narayan, one of the dining-hall servants, with his fist, knocking him down.

Mr. Bazell called the guilty boy to his office and said to him: "You are one of my best pupils and I like you very much. But it was wrong of you to strike a servant who cannot hit you back. It is very important that you should learn to control your temper

early in your life and that you should not manhandle people of lower rank than you. It would be disastrous if, in later life you should behave as you have done or if the man should in self-defence retaliate by hitting you back." Having said that Mr. Bazell gave him ten strokes with the rattan.

Years later, I met this boy at a party in Kuala Lumpur. He was then a distinguished member of the Malayan Civil Service. We talked of our past experiences as schoolboys at the M.C.K.K. He told me then that the experience of being admonished and then caned by Mr. Bazell had taught him a salutary lesson which had influenced his character and guided his conduct later in life and he cherished the memory of Mr. Bazell with affection and gratitude as a great headmaster.

During Mr. Jermyn's headmastership, two of Shakespeare's plays were staged. In 1921, *Julius Caesar* was put on under the direction of Mr. Stowell, the actors donning Malay dresses. It was quite well acted. The fact that the boy actors wore Malay dresses and not Roman togas, did not detract from our enjoyment of the play.

Of the cast of this play, I now only remember Raja Musa bin Raja Mahadi, who superbly enacted the role of Julius Caesar; Mustafa Albakri as Brutus, my cousin Captain Salleh as Casca, the late Incik Mokhtar bin Dato' Penggawa as Cassius and Raja Hisham as the boy Lucius.

Early in 1922 *The Merchant of Venice* was staged, again under the direction of Mr. Stowell. This time the boys wore improvised Venetian dresses of sorts. It, too, was well acted and appreciated by an audience composed of Kuala Kangsar VIPs and the college boys.

Megat Yunus as Portia, Mustafa Albakri as Bassanio, Salleh as Gratiano and Shahban as Shylock were the only members of the cast that I remember. As Shylock, Shahban gave a very good performance.

On account of the unfortunate lowering of the tone of the school caused by Mr. Jermyn's laxity in enforcing discipline, Mr. Bazell had at first to concentrate on the task of restoring it so that no new play was staged until late in 1923. Then, his task having been accomplished, Mr. Bazell decided to stage *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which was the Shakespeare play which had been chosen by the Cambridge Examination Syndicate for the December Junior Cambridge examination.

He ordered from England an ass's head for my friend Megat Khas who was to enact the role of Bottom the Weaver. For the rest of the cast, he got Nawab Din, the tailor from Taiping, who had for years been making the uniforms of the College Cadet Corps and Boy Scout Troop, to copy the Athenian dresses as shown in a catalogue of theatrical costumes and paraphernalia.

The result of this meticulous preparation and many rehearsals of the play at his quarters was that, when it was staged in the College dining-hall, it received the spontaneous plaudits of the audience.

Sultan Iskandar of Perak, the Raja Bendahara (later to be installed as Sultan Yusuf), the Raja di Hilir, the famous Raja Sir Chulan, the *Orang-orang Besar* Perak, the British Resident, the District Officer and the European officers stationed at Kuala Kangsar were the VIPs in the audience who were invited by Mr. Bazell to witness the play.

My friend Megat Khas as Bottom the Weaver and Abdul Kuddus as the mischievous Puck rendered the best performances. I played Lysander in this play and the other members of the cast were Nik Ahmad Kamil as Hermia, Megat Yunus as Helena, Abu Zarin as Demetrius, Raja Hisham as Theseus, my cousin Yazid as Hippolyta, Raja Malek as Titania and Shahmaruddin as Thisbe. The rest of the cast I have forgotten completely.

It is sad to reflect that, of the casts of the three plays of Shakespeare staged during my time at the college, so many of their members have since passed away.

In teaching English Literature in class, it was Mr. Bazell's habit to circulate from boy to boy and while he read out passages from *Macbeth*, *The Poems of Matthew Arnold* or *The Speeches of Edmund Burke*, which were the three works set for the Senior Cambridge Examination of 1924, he would ask the boy at whose desk he had momentarily stopped the meaning of certain words or phrases from the passages he had read out.

Should the boy give the wrong answer or remain silent, he would humorously proclaim him a "stuffed owl" or a "boiled crow", or mildly say "having eyes you see not, having ears you hear not, neither will you understand".

As a history teacher, it was apparent that he had prepared for each day's lesson very thoroughly, as evidenced by the concise

history notes he distributed to all the boys in the class. These notes were a great help to the boys in preparing for the Cambridge Examinations.

He was a confirmed bachelor and when, greatly daring, a senior boy had the presumption to ask him why he didn't get married, he good-humouredly said he was already married to the Malay College and that bigamy was not only illegal, but was expressly forbidden by the Christian religion.

This somewhat facetious answer to an innocent, albeit daring question, seemed vindicated by his absolute devotion and dedication to the welfare of the boys entrusted to his care and his ceaseless efforts to improve the quality of life at the College.

When the atrocious cooking of the food and the fact that the steward Monteiro was having a liaison with the fat cook were reported to him, he sacked them both and engaged two Chinese cooks from town, who were experienced in preparing Malay dishes.

During the morning break, he made it his business to inspect the kitchen and to see to it that it was spotlessly clean and that the food was reasonably palatable.

There was such a marked, all-round improvement in the food that the boys gave up their practice of commissioning Muthu, the dining-hall servant, to buy *ikan rebus* or *sambal udang kering* in town in order to be able to eat their rice, as the so-called curries and *gulai* prepared by the former cook were so nauseating that they were generally left untouched by most of the boys. Poor old Muthu was thus deprived of an additional source of income.

Because there was so much rice left uneaten by the boys during the former cook's charge of the kitchen, it used to enable Karim, the head dining-hall servant, to season it with coconut milk and recook it in the form of *nasi lemak*, which he sold to the boys early in morning with *ikan keli* curry to flavour it.

When Mr. Bazell found out this form of profiteering, he reprimanded Karim and forbade him to sell his *nasi lemak* to the boys.

However, with the sacking of the fat cook and Monteiro the steward there was hardly any spare rice for Karim to convert into *nasi lemak* so that he was forced to sell *air batu kacang* and Marie biscuits to the boys during the morning break.

The marked improvement in our daily diet convinced Mr. Bazell that the time was opportune to abolish the first class diet

provided for the sons of rulers and other Rajas, Tengkus and Syeds. This special diet used to consist of two hen's eggs with two slices of bread and butter, tea and a *pisang emas* or *rastali*, whereas the rest of us were given a duck's egg, two slices of bread with thinly-spread butter, tea and an over-ripe *pisang embun*. The duck's eggs were always given to us as rather oily omelettes, whereas the hen's eggs for our superiors were either fried as "bull-eyes" or half-boiled.

As at the time there was only one remaining son of a ruler, Mr. Bazell also abolished the system of accommodating them in the special rooms or cubicles. The cubicles were then allotted to prefects who were not in charge of the three dormitories.

I don't, however, mean to imply that the boys had thereby ceased to respect the scions of Malay royalty and aristocracy. Malay boys instinctively respect their superiors in rank without necessarily abasing themselves and our attitude and demeanour towards them remained as respectful as before.

Mr. Bazell also changed the name of "monitor" to "prefect" and every Friday evening invited all the prefects for tea at his quarters. By that time I had already been appointed a prefect and I remember vividly what these weekly tea sessions were like. By any standard, it was a very generous tea to which we were invited.

I remember especially the discus-shaped, home-baked bread which his cook had made for the occasion which, with butter and jam or marmalade, we ate with great relish. There were, in addition, cakes, chocolates and fruits galore to sate our appetites.

During tea-time, Mr. Bazell was completely relaxed and talked to us man to man. We felt free to ask him any question and unburden our minds about any problem that perplexed us in the course of carrying out our duties as prefects.

This close contact with the headmaster during the most impressionable period of our lives undoubtedly influenced our character and conduct in the subsequent trials and tribulations of our lives.

One of Mr. Bazell's actions during my time at the College was to select several boys of the Junior and Senior Cambridge Classes who, in his opinion, would benefit from extra coaching after class hours.

These boys individually would be asked to come to his quar-

ters at a time fixed by him and on a different day for each boy, and he would coach him in English, History, Latin or any other subject that he considered suitable for the particular boy he was coaching.

Although this extra attention to bright boys laid him open to the tacit charge of favouritism, he nevertheless persisted in it.

I happened to be one of those selected for this extra coaching, and I remember that the book that he made me read was a volume on physical anthropology in the "Home University Library" series.

The description of the extinct members of the human family, living about half a million years ago in Java as Pithecanthropus erectus or the Java Man and in China as Pithecanthropus pekinensis or the Peking Man, was absolutely new to me and when I came to discuss it with the headmaster in the following week, I expressed my frank disbelief that such beings as the Neanderthal, the Java, the Peking and the Cro-magnon Man, said to be the true man or *Homo sapiens*, ever existed on this earth.

I said that as an orthodox Muslim I had been taught that Adam was the first man created by God and that for me to believe that Cro-magnon Man was actually the first true man and that he had been evolved through million years from the Neanderthal, the Java and the Peking Man was not only sinful, but downright wicked and that I felt certain that I would be consigned to hell, should I persist in such a belief.

Mr. Bazell said that as a Christian he was a regular reader of the Bible which also stated that Adam was the first man. An orthodox Christian, said he, was supposed to believe in the literal truth of the Biblical story.

He also said that he had once totted up the ages of all the prophets mentioned in the Bible from Adam right up to the present time, even though he found it extremely hard to believe that the ages of some of the earlier prophets varied from three to over nine hundred years.

The result of his calculation indicated that Adam was created by God not more than ten thousand years ago at the most, i.e., based on the statement in the Bible that he was created six days after God had created the heaven and the earth, and a couple of days after he created all other living creatures.

But, said Mr. Bazell, astronomers had estimated the age of the earth to be billions of years old and anthropologists had ten-

tatively come to the conclusion that the first true man, possibly the Cro-magnon Man, must have first appeared on the earthly scene some time between fifty to one hundred thousand years ago.

Thus were the seeds of scepticism planted in my mind quite early in my life, and when later, as a medical student, I studied biology and read Darwin's *Origin of Species* and other books on his theory of evolution, I came to the conclusion that the truth was on the side of the astronomers and the anthropologists, and that the Biblical and the Koranic versions of the origin of man and the simultaneous creation by God of all living things was to be regarded not as untrue, but as in some sense allegorical in intent.

Mr. Bazell was apparently interested in astronomy, for he had a telescope which on starry nights he used to focus on the red planet Mars. He also showed the senior boys the constellations of stars which constitute the Great Bear or the Plough, Orion and his belt, the Pleiades and Pegasus. He told us many of these stars were very much bigger than the sun and billions of miles distant from the earth. He said the difference between the stars and the planets was that the former twinkled and the latter did not, because the stars, like the sun, emitted light of their own whereas the planets, like the earth and its satellite, shine by reflected light from the sun.

Mr. Bazell was but a mediocre cricketer and tennis-player, and unlike Mr. Carey, who was a superb footballer and assiduously coached the college team on the tactics of football, Mr. Bazell did not play the game.

Instead, he was an excellent referee, whose decisions were always fair and just. On almost every evening he was to be seen refereeing our football games, running about quite fast on the football field to see to it that the game was played according to the rules.

Sometimes, his service as a referee was even solicited by the captains of outside teams.

On taking over the command of the College Cadet Corps after the resignation of Captain Rooke-Cowell, he was commissioned as a Captain.

Many were the sham fights conducted in the dead of night and in difficult terrain. To render them as realistic as possible blank cartridges were used.

On other occasions he would take the platoon on a long march as far as Enggor Bridge. On arrival there he would order the platoon to be "at ease" for fifteen minutes at the most, and then march us back to the college.

Exhausted by the long march to and from Enggor Bridge, there were usually some stragglers, but he would insist on their falling into line, saying to them, "You are not dead yet".

He said he did all this to train us in endurance and self-control, and as we all had great respect for him, we obeyed his orders without resenting them. What a relief it was when we arrived at the College, and didn't we sleep like the proverbial log that night!

As the shooting range at the College was only suitable for target practice with a .22 rifle and the cadets were provided with carbines of a bigger bore, Mr. Bazell selected ten cadets to go to Taiping for target-shooting under the supervision of Mr. T.S. Adams, the District Officer of Larut, an MVI* lieutenant.

We were comfortably accommodated in a large room in the D.O.'s house, as he had procured for us ten trestle beds complete with mattresses, bedsheets, pillows, pillowcases and mosquito-nets, and at dinner that night we were treated to a nice curry and rice dinner with sago pudding seasoned with *gula melaka* as dessert.

When, on the next morning, we were taken to the shooting range in a lorry, we were flabbergasted to find that we were given the much longer and heavier Lee-Enfield rifles which were the rifles used in actual combat by British soldiers during the Great War, instead of the short and light carbines we had been used to as cadets at the M.C.K.K.

We found, as we lay on the ground with these new rifles, took aim at the target and finally pressed the trigger, that the recoil was so powerful that the fore parts of our shoulders to which the rifle butts were pressed became quite painful. The detonation was so loud that it deafened our ears.

Mr. Adams advised us to press the butts of the rifles much more closely to our shoulders to prevent possible bruising and to diminish the pain caused by the recoil of the rifles. He said that by doing so we would soon get used to the Lee-Enfield rifles. We followed his advice and found that as we continued the

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* Malayan Volunteer Infantry

target-shooting we actually enjoyed the experience of being boy soldiers.

It was at this rifle range that I first met or rather saw the late Raja Kamarulzaman, the son of Raja Mansur and grandson of Sultan Abdullah. He was then serving as an M.A.S. Officer at Taiping and had not yet been promoted to the M.C.S. He was a stocky young man of twenty-five whom Mr. T.S. Adams addressed familiarly as "Kam". The way he talked to Mr. Adams showed that he wouldn't *kowtow* to any *orang putih* under the sun. Mr. Adams was then generally considered as a pro-Malay M.C.S. officer and some years later when he was British Resident, Selangor I found that he had certain favourites among M.A.S. officers who had been promoted to the Malayan Civil Service. One of them was my cousin Salleh bin Haji Sulaiman, who was one of the youngest M.A.S. officers to be promoted to the M.C.S.

When we returned to Mr. Adams's house after the target-shooting practice with the Lee-Enfield rifles, we were consoled with another rice and curry dinner followed by rice pudding and coffee. We tried our best to appear cheerful despite our sore shoulders. Going to bed early, we slept as soundly as our painful shoulders permitted.

After breakfast the next morning, we returned to Kuala Kangsar by train after thanking Mr. Adams for his hospitality.

On our arrival back at the college, we bared our shoulders to one another and found only a couple of us were bruised, but in all ten of us the pain and swelling did not subside until some days later.

After the resignation of Captain Rooke-Cowell, no science teaching was possible for a couple of months until the arrival of Mr. L.R. Wheeler, our new science and mathematics master.

Mr. Leonard Richmond Wheeler started his educational career in the British West Indies in 1913 as science and mathematics master at the Grammar School, Antigua, and in 1914 became science and mathematics master at the Queen's Royal College, Trinidad. Following this there was a break of over three years, during which he served in the British West Indies Regiment and in the RAF as a bomber pilot until, in 1919, he returned to Trinidad as third assistant master at the Queen's Royal College.

In 1921, he was transferred to the Education Department, S.S. and F.M.S. and on 6 December, 1921, to the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar.

As soon as he began to teach, we realised at once that he was an excellent teacher. Captain Rooke-Cowell had not bothered to get proper theoretical and practical chemistry textbooks for us, contenting himself by using his own chemistry notebooks and dictating to the class from them. The practical experiments that he had asked us to perform were also rather haphazard.

Mr. Wheeler changed this haphazard mode of teaching chemistry to a more orderly and systemic one. He arranged for us to be provided with proper textbooks in which the theoretical part of the subject was generally followed up by the appropriate experiment to prove any theory or law in the text.

Apart from theoretical teaching in class, he insisted that all the experiments in the chemistry textbook should be systematically carried out by the boys, reserving for himself the more elaborate ones, which he demonstrated to the class.

I was reappointed class demonstrator in the Junior Cambridge Chemistry laboratory, from which I had been demoted by Captain Rooke-Cowell.

We were so enthused by Mr. Wheeler's teaching that one evening while the other boys were at their games, the three class demonstrators, Megat Khas, Yazid and I, opened the laboratory and repeated the bell jar experiment which had been demonstrated to us that morning by the science master.

In the process of cleaning-up after the experiment, some small bits and pieces of yellow phosphorus were accidently dropped on the floor and after we had locked the laboratory door, continued to burn.

At about 10.00 p.m. that night the Sikh watchman saw a small fire in the laboratory and at once raised the alarm. The senior demonstrators, Mustafa Albakri and Mokhtar, at once opened the laboratory and put out the fire. Fortunately it was only a small one and not likely to have spread to the wooden benches and cupboards, otherwise the whole laboratory might have been burned down.

We were hauled out of bed by Mustafa and hauled over the coals for our carelessness.

Later that night, Yazid crept stealthily downstairs and with bits of stale bread, wiped out two or three glowing spots on the

floor, where traces of yellow phosphorus continued to burn.

The next morning news of the fire in the laboratory began to spread in an exaggerated form to the effect that the laboratory was nearly burned down the night before on account of our carelessness.

Many of the boys looked askance at us for our alleged attempt at arson. But one of the two senior demonstrators, Mokhtar, was quite sympathetic and tried his best to console us and still our fears.

That afternoon at about tea-time a message was conveyed to us that Mr. Wheeler wished to see the three of us at his quarters. So in fear and trembling, Megat Khas, Yazid and I proceeded to the science master's house, fully expecting to be severely reprimanded for our carelessness.

On arrival there, however, we were very greatly surprised to be greeted by a smiling Mr. Wheeler at the open door. He invited us to his drawing room and asked us to be seated.

Tea had been laid for four persons and there were cakes, biscuits and slices of papaya, and Mr. Wheeler invited us to help ourselves, and made no allusion to the laboratory fire.

It was only after tea that he started to allude to it. He commended us on our keenness and advised us to keep it up to ensure our success in the Junior Cambridge Examination. He cautioned us, however, to be very careful in performing the experiments described in the book, for in chemistry, he said, we were dealing with very dangerous, very poisonous and very inflammable substances.

The next day, before starting the history lesson, Mr. Bazell addressed the class and said that it had been reported to him that "three energetic chemists" had, through their carelessness, caused a fire in the laboratory. As carelessness of the kind they had shown was a failing that deserved severe punishment, he was disposed to inflict it on them so that they might in future correct this failing.

But they had shown commendable keenness and their science and form master had pleaded so eloquently for mercy on their behalf that he had decided not to punish them. However, he warned the whole class that any repetition of the same kind of carelessness would in future be severely dealt with.

Thus ended a *contretemps* which caused so much worry to "the three energetic chemists".

Mr. Wheeler was a remarkable man, not only as a science and mathematics master, but also in other respects; already equipped with a B.Sc. degree from the University of London, he assiduously studied Malay with the help of a *munshi* and a Malay houseboy-cum-cook called Alam, and had himself registered as an external student of the University of London for the degree of B.A. in Malay Studies. At the end of a couple of years he sat for the examination and passed it.

While preparing for this examination, he also wrote a book, entitled *The Modern Malay*. It was a bulky tome and I remember one of the questions posed by Mr. Wheeler in this book was whether the Malays were a "dysgenic" race.

As he did not take the trouble to explain what he meant by the expression "dysgenic race", I could only go by the dictionary meaning of the word "dysgenic" and conclude that what he probably meant was that, due to a great deal of inbreeding, consanguineous marriages, and other adverse environmental factors, the race might degenerate or even become extinct in the distant future.

So far his "fears" for the Malays have proved to be quite mistaken, as they seem to be multiplying at an unparalleled annual rate.

Otherwise, in this book he lavished much praise on the Malays and said that they had many admirable qualities that made them very likeable and endeared them to this colonial master.

Mr. Wheeler was quite a sportsman and played football, hockey, cricket and tennis. He was an indifferent footballer, but excellent at hocky, cricket and tennis.

At cricket he coached us in batting and bowling. I was not an apt pupil at batting, but became quite a tolerable bowler, in which capacity I later became a member of the King Edward VII College of Medicine second eleven.

It was at tennis, however, that he excelled and at the annual tennis tournament held at the Idris Club, Kuala Kangsar, he repeatedly won the Singles Championship Trophy.

It was about the middle of his two years' tour of service as the science and mathematics master at the College that King Rama of Siam, as Thailand was then called, paid a visit to Kuala Kangsar at the invitation of Sultan Iskandar of Perak, who was apparently an old friend.

The College Cadet Corps under the command of Cikgu Ahmad Jalaludin provided a guard-of-honour. King Rama, accompanied by the Sultan of Perak took the salute and afterwards inspected the platoon, praised it for its smart turnout and congratulated Cikgu Jalaludin for the spick-and-span appearance of the cadets.

The king, wearing a field marshal's uniform of the Siamese army, which closely resembled that of a British field marshal, was a stocky man of about forty with a pleasant smiling face.

After the guard-of-honour, the king was conducted by Sultan Iskandar to a grandly caparisoned elephant with a beautifully decorated howdah on its back. Having seated themselves on cushioned seats in the howdah, the elephant proceeded at a slow pace to the Istana, followed by other elephants with the Raja Muda, the Raja Bendahara, the Raja di Hilir and the major chiefs.

That night King Rama was entertained at a banquet, to which all the European officers stationed at Kuala Kangsar were invited. The other guests were of course the titled members of the Perak royal family and the major chiefs of Perak.

I do not remember whether King Rama visited the College or not, but recollect quite well that on the following afternoon, a sumptuous tea-party was held on the lawn of the King's Pavilion, the mansion at which the Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner for the Malay States stayed during their visits to Kuala Kangsar. To this tea-party, major and minor chiefs, the leaders of the major communities of Kuala Kangsar, Taiping and Ipoh were invited. The teaching staff and the prefects were also invited. Altogether about 2,000 guests came to honour King Rama of Siam.

It was at this tea-party that I witnessed for the first time Mr. Wheeler's prowess as a tennis player, for he and another player were invited to give an exhibition match. I remember that Mr. Wheeler overwhelmed his opponent with comparative ease.

In teaching chemistry to the Junior and Senior Cambridge classes, Mr. Wheeler was not content with merely teaching in class or laboratory. Occasionally he would take us out on an exploratory excursion to some neighbouring ponds and stagnant pools. Taking a rack of test tubes with him, he would approach a pond which showed bubbles among the layer of moss or water-hyacinths which covered the surface of the water in the ponds.

Then holding the mouth of a test tube over a bubble he would burst the bubble with his finger. After a time he would close the mouth of the test tube with his thumb and ask one of the boys to light a match. He would then expose the mouth of the tube to the lighted match. We were all surprised to see the mouth of the tube burst into a bright flame. Mr. Wheeler then explained that all the bubbles on the surface of the pond contained methane or marsh gas and that methane was an inflammable gas.

He added that it was this marsh gas, ignited by an electrical charge in the air and seen floating about in the air, that people in England called "will o' the wisp" and Malays call *bajang*, a ghost much feared by them.

Mr. Wheeler was very active in the Scout movement and eventually attained the rank of assistant commissioner for Perak. If I remember rightly, he later won the Silver Wolf, the second man to win this highest of all Scout awards, after Mr. F.C. Sands, the Scout Commissioner for Malaya.

From Class VI, the equivalent of Form I, up to the Junior Cambridge Class, I maintained my position as the top boy in my class, my friend Megat being nearly always the second boy and my cousin Yazid, third.

When we moved to the Senior Cambridge Class, there was a falling off in my performance in class which was inevitably noticed by the science and form master and duly reported to my guardian, as I have already mentioned.

No doubt, he attributed this falling off to my supposed self-complacency brought about by my success in winning the Butler-Wise Scholarship for two successive years, followed by my gaining an Honours Certificate in the Junior Cambridge Examination of 1923.

While it was true that I did think well of myself during my secondary school education, the true cause of my depression and listlessness in class had to do with the marriage of the girl that I loved to a cousin of mine, who had been a pupil of the College before me and was already employed as an Agricultural Assistant in government service.

Her mother, who was dying of cancer of the womb, had expressed her desire to see her daughter married off before she passed away.

Call it calf-love or what you will, but this sudden and unexpected marriage of the girl who had been my playmate and whom I dearly loved had an adverse effect on my high-strung and sensitive nature.

My work in the Senior Cambridge Class suffered thereby, and Mr. Wheeler duly noted this falling off in his report to my guardian in the following terms: "He does not appear to be working so well as before, but is getting on well on the whole in the Senior Class".

The result was predictable. For in the Senior Cambridge Examination held in December 1924, I was soundly beaten by my friend Megat Khas and for the first time took second place. What actually happened was that, though I had scored credit marks in the theoretical paper, I made a miserable mess of my practical chemistry and dismally failed in it. My friend Megat Khas scored credit marks in both. In the art subject, I managed to get a simple pass and Megat Khas gained a credit rating.

In addition to the "specialist" teachers I have already mentioned, Cikgu Ahmad Jalaludin was transferred from the Penang Free School to the College to teach geography.

He was about the same age as Za'ba and, although only possessed of the Senior Cambridge and Normal Class Certificates, he turned out to be a first-class geography master.

The geography notes that he so meticulously prepared and distributed to the pupils of the two Cambridge classes were models of their kind and it is not an exaggeration to say that very few boys were known to have failed in this subject during the many years that he served as geography master at the College.

He was responsible for forming the first Boy Scout troop at the College. In fact, this troop was actually the first one to be formed in the whole state of Perak, with him as its first scout master.

Meor Aris was the first troop leader and the two other patrol leaders that I remember were my cousin Mohamed Salleh bin Haji Sulaiman of the Fox Patrol and Mokhtar bin Dato' Penggawa of Selangor of the Peewit Patrol. In my second year I was recruited into the latter patrol.

With the passing of time, most of the bigger boys including

Meor Aris, Mohamed Salleh and Mokhtar were recruited into the Cadet Corps to replace cadets who had left school.

So we younger boy scouts were promoted to positions of leadership in the troop. In this way I ended up as a senior patrol leader with three stripes on my left breast pocket and a number of efficiency badges on my left sleeve.

My immediate superior was Raja Hisham bin Raja Malek. He was noted for the extreme neatness of his uniform and the *savoire-faire* with which he commanded the troop and prepared it for inspection by the scout master.

We were tested for the swimming badge at the Kangsar tributary of the Perak River. And to enable us to pass the cookery test, the scout master showed us how to cook a pot of rice and to make a bun a few days before the test.

What we enjoyed most, however, was signalling with the black-and-white flags and tracking, which meant marking the tracks along which we passed, through bushes and secondary jungle, with special scout signs, by means of which our fellow scouts, familiar with the signs, would be able to locate us. Should they fail to recognise these signs they were of course "led up the garden path".

Having collected the requisite number of badges, Raja Hisham and I and a few others managed to qualify as first class scouts before we, too, had to give up scouting, which we loved, in order to become mere privates in the Cadet Corps.

As far as I remember, none of the boy scouts of my time ever reached the status of a King's scout for the simple reason that, as we grew older, we had to fill up the vacancies created by the members of the Cadet Corps who had left school.

This disadvantage was the natural result of the College being then a small school with an enrolment of not more than one hundred and fifty.

For a time Cikgu Ahmad Jalaludin was both commander of the Cadet Corps (in which capacity he had been commissioned as honorary lieutenant) as well as scout master. But finding the two jobs too much for him to hold, he later gave up the scout mastership and handed it over to Cikgu Hassan.

When Captain Rooke-Cowell took over command of the Cadet Corps, Cikgu Jalaludin became second-in-command and continued in that position when Mr. Bazell, who had been commissioned honorary captain, was in command.

Together they made the Cadet Corps not only smart in appearance but well-trained in the tactics of warfare: to which end many sham fights were organised by Mr. Bazell.

Besides being second-in-command of the Cadet Corps, Cikgu Jalaludin volunteered his service as sports secretary for the College, and as such, assumed the responsibility of arranging the daily schedule of games to be played by the football, hockey and cricket first and second teams on a particular day during the appropriate seasons.

He had a ferocious temper comparable only to that of my uncle Ibrahim. He would vent it on those of his pupils who were negligent in studying his geography notes and thus failed to answer his questions correctly.

In doing so, he very often shouted angrily at them, tweaked their ears, at the same time telling them in his Penang dialect that they had *otak lumpok* (mud brains).

Mr. Bazell, who had never been known to lose his temper and who on occasion might be teaching in the neighbouring class, must have heard these angry shouts, but he never took Cikgu Jalaludin to task for his lack of self-control because he was such an excellent geography master and contributed so much in other ways to the College.

He did not play any games with the exception of hockey, in which he excelled as goalkeeper.

Another accomplishment of his, which I have reason to remember very well, was that of a part-time reporter for the *Penang Gazette*, in which capacity he vied with Mr. Koelmeyer, a retired surveyor employed by *The Times of Malaya* as their Kuala Kangsar reporter.

One day, he had to play in a hockey match and asked me to cover the game as an untried, amateur cub reporter. I made a hash of the assignment, for which he railed against me for my incompetence.

In striking contrast to Cikgu Ahmad Jalaludin, who was so actively involved in the extramural affairs of the College, Za'ba did not take part in any extracurricular activity with the exception of his editorship of the *Semaian*.

Aside from his expertise in teaching Malay, which enabled many boys to do well in the Cambridge examinations, he devoted every minute of his spare time to writing articles in English on Malay language, customs and superstitions which he con-

tributed to the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Society*, and in Malay to Malay newspapers and periodicals on educational, religious and social matters.

He also continued to study Arabic by himself, having been taught the elements of the language by Lebai Abass of Linggi during his boyhood. Later, when he was teaching at the English College, Johore, he was taught by Sheikh Tahir, a religious teacher and Arabic scholar, father of Tan Sri Haji Hamdan, the present Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Sains.

It was sometime in 1922 that he wrote the article on "The Poverty of the Malays" and sent it to *The Malay Mail* for publication. It was so well written that the editor took the unprecedented step of publishing it in the editorial column.

The article caused quite a flutter in the literary dovecotes of that time and several correspondents, among them Tuan Haji Abdul Majid, wrote to the *The Malay Mail* criticising him for exposing the weaknesses of the Malays and for what they considered the extreme pessimism of his article.

For it was not only economic poverty that Za'ba wrote about, but also their "poverty" in the fields of literature, education, culture, etc.

In his letter, designed to belittle Za'ba's well-meant attempt to rouse the Malays from their lethargy, Haji Abdul Majid parodied two stanzas from a poem by the American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

> Tell me not in mournful numbers,
> That the Malay is a dying race;
> For their soul isn't dead that slumbers
> Even in the old miserable days.
>
> Tell me not in mournful numbers,
> The way to improve the Malays;
> For surely every Malay remembers,—
> Be contented and be modest — always.

Undeterred by his critics, who bayed round him like a pack of hounds, Za'ba wrote another letter with the caption "The Salvation of the Malays" in which he dealt precisely with what Haji Abdul Majid in the above parody told him not to do, i.e. write about "the ways to improve the Malays".

The battle was thus joined between the two embittered rivals and from that time on many friends and pupils of Za'ba thought

that Haji Majid, who besides being pilgrimage officer also worked as a member of the Political Intelligence Section of the Police, was responsible for reporting him to the government as anti-British.

In any case the powers-that-be apparently came to the conclusion that Za'ba was too dangerous a man to continue to be a member of the teaching staff of the Malay College, as he was considered likely to poison the minds of the pupils.

Soon he was transferred to Kuala Lumpur to work under Mr. A. Keir, the acting chief inspector of schools, S.S. and F.M.S.

Mr. Keir was formerly the principal of the Matang Teachers Training College who, before going on long leave, had recommended that Haji Abdul Majid should be appointed acting principal.

And when he returned from leave and was promoted to the post of inspector of schools, Perak, Haji Abdul Majid was promoted on his recommendation to the post of assistant inspector of schools under him.

It is clear therefore that the two belonged to a mutual admiration society and Haji Yusof, Za'ba's younger brother, believed that both were responsible for reporting to the government that Za'ba was anti-British and should be removed from the Malay College.

Za'ba worked for a few months in Kuala Lumpur under Mr. Keir before being transferred to the Sultan Idris Training College, Tanjong Malim, to head the newly-created Translation Bureau, the brain-child of Mr. O.T. Dussek.

Before leaving Kuala Lumpur, he was exhorted by Mr. Keir to stop writing such "subversive" articles as "The Poverty of the Malays" and "The Salvation of the Malays" and devote himself to the much more useful occupation of translating story books and government publications.

Mr. Keir and his Political Intelligence colleagues were naive enough to think that by appointing Za'ba as head of the Translation Bureau, he would have very little time to write or translate books that would influence the thinking of the Malays.

As a matter of fact, aside from the routine work of translating such dull government publications as Legislative Council ordinances and enactments, he not only managed to translate Charles Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* and Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*, but in addition also wrote the Malay

versions of his two *Malay Mail* articles.

In these two, much-expanded versions he described in great detail the undesirable traits of the Malay character, the thinking of the so-called Malay elite and intellectuals, which he considered to be the real causes of Malay poverty, and suggested specific measures to eradicate these causes. In doing so, he did not mince his words and was so downright explicit that no one could possibly misunderstand what he intended to convey to his readers.

There can be no doubt that, had the clarion call of Za'ba been answered by the Malay elite and intellectuals of the day, and had his suggested measures for the amelioration of Malay poverty been seriously considered and adopted by them, the Herculean task of abolishing rural poverty and the restructuring of Malaysian society, at present being implemented by the National Front Government, would have been rendered considerably lighter.

As it was, they turned a deaf ear to Za'ba's clarion call and preferred to listen to Tuan Haji Abdul Majid's siren song.

It was only some twenty years or so later that Ungku Aziz, (the present Royal Professor and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya), then a young lecturer in the Department of Economics of the University of Malaya, started his research into the problem of Malay poverty and, by actually living for weeks in poverty-striken *kampung* in several Malay states and applying the research methods of a trained economist, identified its true causes and clarified the proper measures that should be taken to eradicate it.*

The results of his research he embodied in a series of articles published in the *Straits Times* in the 1950s. I remember reading these articles with great interest.

Za'ba's two *Malay Mail* letters had the effect of sowing the seeds of political consciousness in the hearts and minds of some of the Malay College boys.

After Za'ba's transfer to Tanjong Malim, his arch rival, Tuan Haji Abdul Majid bin Haji Zainudin, succeeded him as Malay master at the College.

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* My son-in-law, Ahmad bin Hassan, then a RIDA officer stationed at the *kampung* of Nyalas in the district of Jasin, was a witness to how Ungku Aziz conducted his research in Nyalas.

He was an Old Boy of the Old Malay Residential School who had belatedly joined the school after having passed the Junior Cambridge Examination at the Victoria Institution. It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that when he sat the government Seventh Standard Examination at the Malay Residential School, he easily attained first place in the examination.

He afterwards served as a teacher at the Old School and its successor, the Malay College, for a number of years until 1918 when he was appointed an assistant inspector of schools and was stationed at Telok Anson.

He had written quite a good elementary grammar and vocabulary book which was being used in Class VI.

In his autobiography, Haji Majid claims that it was this elementary grammar that enabled Malay College boys to master the English language in about half the time that the pupils of other schools took to achieve the same standard.

While I agree that new boys found the grammar very helpful in introducing them to the English language, I do not think the standard of English subsequently attained by them was exclusively due to their mastery of Haji Abdul Majid's book.

It must be remembered that as they progressed further in their studies, they had the advantage of being taught English language and grammar by such a fine teacher as Mr. R.C.W. Rowlands and during Mr. Hargreaves's headmastership by such British teachers as Mr. J. O'May, Mr. Vanrenan, Mr. Ball, Mr. Stewart and above all by Mr. Hargreaves himself; and during Mr. Jermyn's and Mr. Bazell's headmasterships by Mr. Beamish, Mr. Wheeler, Capt. Rooke-Cowell, Mr. Walker and Mr. Stowell, besides the two headmasters.

Regardless of whether they were accomplished teachers or not, the very fact of hearing them speak their own language daily must have been of great help to the boys in learning it.

Besides the elementary grammar and vocabulary of which Haji Abdul Majid was so inordinately proud, and his *Self-taught Malay* mentioned earlier, other publications of his included *Malayan Kaleidoscope*, *The Malays in Malaya by One of Them* (in which he sycophantically praised British protection and administration of the Malay States so fulsomely that one's stomach is turned by reading it), *Anak Kunchi Pengetahuan*, several articles in the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* and many articles contributed to Malay newspapers. In

short, he was then considered a scholar and an intellectual and the arch rival of Za'ba.

He had just returned from the pilgrimage to Mecca, wore a turban and sported a goatee beard.

Thirty-six years of age, he was short and obese. He had no notion of how to dress neatly and always appeared in class in a crumpled khaki jacket and baggy trousers of the same material.

Furthermore, he was addicted to the habit of chewing the leaf of the betel vine-cum-nut, the juice of which stained his lips and teeth.

Although he was obviously well-versed in Malay grammar and literature, he was either totally uninterested in teaching or too lazy to do so.

In this connection, I remember that one day he set us a certain passage in *Sejarah Melayu* to translate into English and then relaxed in his chair and actually dozed in class.

An irreverent boy, who had apparently read *Pickwick Papers*, parodied Charles Dickens and muttered *sotto voce*, "D---n that Cikgu, he has gone to sleep again!"

And Ahmad Babjee, when asked by Tuan Haji Majid to give an example of the use of the suffix "nya", answered, "*Janggutnya saperti janggut kambing*," (His beard is like that of a goat's), on hearing which the class roared with laughter. Our teacher was not in the least annoyed by Babjee's facetious way of referring to his beard and sportingly joined in the merriment after tweaking Babjee's ear.

After a few days of his indifferent manner of teaching, I became convinced that he could not hold a candle to Za'ba as a teacher of Malay language and literature.

Fortunately for us and for the College, so as to prove how bored he was with the tedious job of teaching, he applied for and obtained the much more mobile and better-paid post of pilgrimage officer and left the College six months after his second advent as a teacher there.

He was succeeded by his son-in-law, Cikgu Mohamed Zain, from Anderson School. He was the exact opposite of his father-in-law.

He was quite a handsome man who wore a well-trimmed moustache. He was also a well-dressed man and always wore a *songkok* in class.

While he was not the equal of Za'ba as a teacher, he taught

Malay far better than Haji Abdul Majid and the first editorial he wrote for the *Semaian* showed that he had a fine literary style.

In his autobiography, Tuan Haji Abdul Majid criticised his son-in-law for having written to him directly to ask for the hand of his daughter Aminah in marriage, and for shaking the hands of the Raja Muda of Selangor instead of performing the obeisance (*sembah*), and in general for his flouting of Malay customs.

As far as I can recollect, while he was the Malay master at the College he did not *kowtow* to the headmaster nor to any of the European masters. I believe this was the reason why he was soon transferred from the College.

He was succeeded by Cikgu Abdullah, a graduate of the Matang Teachers Training College. He was a rather short but sturdy young man of twenty-five with wavy hair, whose face was nearly always wreathed in smiles.

He was a connoisseur of literary style. It was a treat to hear him talk on the beautiful Malay of *Hikayat Sang Sembah*, the terse and compact style of the *Sejarah Melayu*, the realism and pathos of *Hikayat Hang Tuah* describing the mortal combat between Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat and the beautifully-worded *gurindam*, *seloka* and *syair* contained in *Kitab Gemala Hikmat* of Cikgu Sulaiman, formerly an assistant master of the Malacca Teachers Training College.

As a former student of the Teachers Training College, Matang, he had been taught by my uncle, Mohamed bin Dato' Muda, so that he was especially friendly with me and Yazid.

After completing the two-year course there and passing the final examination at the top of his class, he had been appointed an assistant master there before coming to the College.

He knew little English on arrival at the College and Mr. Bazell took him in hand to teach him English and prepare him for the Cambridge Examinations.

He apparently passed the Senior Cambridge Examination, for in 1931, when I was in my fifth year as a medical student, I was surprised to meet him in Singapore where he was employed as a police inspector.

The only other extracurricular activity at the College during my time there resulted from the formation of the Literary and Debating Society early in 1924.

I was elected honorary secretary of the Society and Megat Yunus, the head prefect and a Malay Probationer, president. Mr. L.D. Whitfield was good enough to help me draw up the Society's constitution.

Debates took place in the College Hall, interspersed with meetings at which members were invited to tell their most hair-raising ghost stories or describe interesting events which they had themselves witnessed or strange customs peculiar to their own district. I remember that the best debater was the late Raja Rastam Shahrone, a classmate of mine and a grandson of Sultan Abdullah.

Occasionally Mr. Bazell was requested to show us lantern slides of an educational nature in the College Hall. These slides projected on a screen fixed to the wall of the Hall were most interesting and were much appreciated.

For having translated Wilkinson's *Sungai Ujong*, my uncle Ibrahim rewarded me with an expensive, self-filling, Waterman fountain-pen and a thick volume of Nestfield's *English Grammar, Composition and Idioms*. I was delighted to receive these presents, especially as I was able to use the fountain-pen during the rest of my school career as well as during the subsequent six years as a medical student.

As for the book, I had by then become a compulsive reader of English grammar and I must say that Nestfield's textbook was of great help to me in the study of the English language.

After the official opening of the Sultan Idris Training College in 1923, which I attended, my uncle Ibrahim again solicited my help in translating a book on physical geography during the ensuing vacation.

On returning to Linggi, however, I was not able to start translating the book, for on the day following my arrival in Linggi, my brother Kassim fell ill with a mysterious disease and, in a matter of two days, unexpectedly died.

It was one of the saddest experiences of my life, for I loved my brother very much and he for his part idolised me. He was such a lovable little fellow and was doing so well at school.

On the afternoon of my arrival he met me on the bridle path near the Linggi mosque and seemed overjoyed at seeing me.

On arrival at the ancestral home, my mother regaled us with *lempuk*-cum-coconut parings and tea. After having had our bath at the large well near the mosque, Kassim and I returned home

to partake of a delicious dinner of *nasi minyak*, chicken curry, *telur asin*, *goreng ikan puyu* and *sambal tempoyak*.

After the dinner I told Kassim of my life at the Malay College and advised him to study his lessons thoroughly so that he too could apply for admission to the College. We eventually went to sleep at about eleven o'clock.

On waking up at about eight o'clock the following morning, I urged Kassim to wake up and was surprised to find him apparently ill. I asked him repeatedly what ailed him, but he failed to answer my questions. He appeared rather dazed and mentally confused.

I was quite alarmed at the sudden change in his appearance and summoned my mother to the *tengah rumah* room where Kassim and I had slept that night.

My mother promptly carried Kassim to her room in the kitchen part of the house so that she could look after him. She tried to tempt him with some *roti canai* and chicken curry, but to no avail. He could only swallow a few spoonfuls of milk and after that he declined all forms of food offered to him.

My aunt Khatijah and her husband and other close relatives were informed of Kassim's illness and they all came to the house and Mak Esah, the *dukun*, was called to treat Kassim.

She duly came to the house and muttered her inevitable *jampi*, smeared Kassim's body with betel-vine juice and shook a sarong from his head to his feet in an act supposedly designed to drive away any evil spirit (*hantu*) that had taken possession of Kassim's body.

All that day Kassim remained in a state of stupor, unresponsive to any questions addressed to him and refusing all forms of food other than a few teaspoonfuls of milk.

That night he grew visibly worse and became comatose. At about 2.00 a.m., my aunt Khatijah's husband and I lighted an *andang* of dry coconut fronds and went to Pawang Talib's house at Kampung Hilir.

Pawang Talib was a scraggy old man of seventy, who, in place of a beard, sported a tuft of hair sprouting just above his Adam's apple.

On arrival at the house, he asked for a bowl of betel-vine juice over which he muttered a long incantation and then gazed into the depths of the bowl for at least five minutes, at the end of which he told my mother and the assembled relatives that

Kassim would slowly recover consciousness at the first cock-crow and would be fully cured of his illness at dawn.

We waited with bated breath for the first cock-crow. When we heard it at about 4.00 a.m. and looked at Kassim, we were terribly disappointed that, far from showing any sign of recovery, he was sinking fast. At dawn, he died without regaining consciousness.

Kassim's death at the age of ten was a desolating blow to us all. He had endeared himself to us by his winning ways and was such a promising boy that much was expected of him in his school career, and a bright future had been predicted of him as a man.

He was buried next to my father's grave and for the rest of the vacation I visited his grave daily, shedding bitter tears of sorrow and regret.

In fact, I felt so grieved by my brother's premature death that, had I not sought solace in English literature, the health of my body and mind would have been wrecked.

I remember the book which saved my sanity. It was the volume of Macaulay's *Critical and Historical Essays* that Mr. Rowlands had presented to me on my being promoted to Class IIB. I began to read it with great interest, particularly the historical essay on Robert Clive and the critical one on Addison, the creator of Sir Roger de Coverley, Will Wimble and other characters.

I also sought to distract my mind from brooding over my brother's death by making a half-hearted attempt to translate the 250-page physical geography book which my uncle Ibrahim had asked me to do. As it was five times longer than Wilkinson's *Sungai Ujong* and contained so many scientific terms, it was by no means an easy task. So by the end of the vacation I had only succeeded in translating a few pages of the book and I was only able to complete the task during my spare time in the following school term and the next school vacation.

To this day, even with the hindsight of a doctor, I am unable to hazard a definite diagnosis of the fell disease or infection that caused the premature death of my brother. All that I can think of is that, even before my homecoming, the disease or infection had already begun what doctors describe as its "incubation period". That was why its onset struck us all at the time like a bolt from the blue.

I have already referred to my failure in chemistry in the Senior Cambridge Examination of 1924, due to the miserable mess I had made of the chemistry practical.

When, after the practical, I told Mr. Bazell that I had made a mess of it, he appeared to be genuinely incredulous as he told me that I was too modest and pessimistic. He was so confident that I had acquitted myself quite well in the practical part of the chemistry papers because in the Junior Cambridge trial examination at the end of 1923, Mr. Wheeler had given me full marks i.e. 100/100 and written in blue pencil on my paper the word "Excellent". Mr. Wheeler had shown my papers to Mr. Bazell.

Megat Khas had in the same examination scored 75/100 and on his paper, Mr. Wheeler had written the following words: "Your terminology is grandiloquent but by no means accurate, not to say tautological." Although in mid-1924, Mr. Wheeler had written in his progress report to my guardian: "He does not seem to be working so well as before", he had added the following sentence, "but is doing very well on the whole in the Senior Class."

When the full results of the examination became known, Mr. Bazell tactfully concealed his disappointment over my failure in chemistry. He cheered me up by saying that I had scored two distinctions and credit marks in three other subjects and that these five marks fulfilled the entrance qualifications to the College of Medicine, Singapore. He also reminded me of the fact that I had been the first boy in my class from Class VI right up to the Junior Cambridge and that I had won the Butler-Wise Scholarship Prize for two consecutive years.

For my part I was not unduly disappointed with my Senior Cambridge Examination results. I consoled myself with the thought that I had won the English prize every year and that in the Junior and Senior Cambridge Examinations I had won the Malay prize as well.

Mr. Bazell was, in fact, soothingly sympathetic. He said to me that he had always thought that I was worth more than the examination results indicated. He took me to his office and asked me to choose the two books which I wished to have as my prizes for English and Malay. I chose Rudyard Kipling's *Plain Tales from the Hills* and Hugh Clifford's *The Further Side of Silence*.

My friend Megat Khas, great-hearted as always and far from

showing any exultation over the fact that he had at long last succeeded in beating me, expressed his disappointment that I had not done as well as he, and to mollify me, said that he envied me for getting distinctions in English language and literature, adding that it was always more difficult to gain distinction marks in those subjects than in geography.

In connection with the latter subject, the indefatigable geography master, Cikgu Ahmad Jalaludin had, at his own expense, created two silver geography medals which were to be awarded to the boys who gained distinctions in geography in the Junior and Senior Cambridge Examinations.

The first boy to win the Senior Cambridge medal was my cousin Mohamed Salleh bin Haji Sulaiman, to be followed by Ibrahim bin Abdul Karim, nicknamed Ibrahim Ah Chong.

I won the Junior Cambridge medal in 1923 and Megat Khas the Senior Cambridge medal in 1924.

After the Senior Cambridge Examination, we stayed on for another term at the College and attended a post-Senior Cambridge Class, where Mr. L.D. Whitfield, a newly appointed Irish master, taught us additional mathematics.

He was an extremely tall, thin Irishman who spoke English with a pronounced brogue. For he pronounced the words "suppose" as "zuppose" and "one" as "wone" and "half" as "hallef", and as his lips were rather thick, it was quite an amusing sight to see him pouting them in pronouncing the words "suppose" and "one".

But he taught us additional mathematics very well, and gave lucid explanations of "Combinations and Permutations" and of what the term "infinity" signifies in mathematics and how it was symbolised.

As an undergraduate he had been a member of the University of Dublin rugger fifteen. So after his coming, rugby football was started at the College, Mr. Whitfield enthusiastically coaching the boys two or three times a week.

Before that, football was the most popular game and the College had the reputation of having produced some of the best teams in the state of Perak. The high standard of football was undoubtedly due to the encouragement of the first headmaster, Mr. Hargreaves, who in his younger days was said to be a member of a first division county soccer team in England.

When I joined the College in 1919, the football eleven was

captained by Tengku Mohamed ibni Sultan Ahmad of Pahang who, in addition was the head monitor and champion athlete of the school.

The other members of the team that I remember were the two brothers Raja Aman Shah and Raja Shahar Shah, Raja Bazid the goalkeeper, Mohamed Jahidin, Lamin Wan Ali, Abdullah bin Haji Dahan, the future Undang of Rembau, and my cousin Ahmad Lobak.

In the annual fixtures against the Penang Free School Team in 1919 and 1920, the College won both matches.

Playing as either centre-forward or inside-right for the Penang Free School team for the two years was Syed Omar Shahabudin, the first elected Menteri Besar of Kedah.

The Penang team had brought as a reserve the late Dr. Ong Chong Keng, the pre-war Federal Councillor who was such a notable orator of his time. As a schoolboy he was an accomplished guitarist and in a concert held in the College Hall on the night after the match, he demonstrated his skill with the instrument.

The only other Free School players that I remember were Basha Marican, the captain of the team and the identical twins Ahmad and Mohamed, who played the inside positions in their forward line.

Playing again in the Free School team the following year, grim tragedy struck one of the twins. Colliding in mid-air with a College player while jumping for the ball, one of the twins ruptured one of his internal organs, possibly his spleen, and he died of internal haemorrhage a few hours later in one of the College dormitories.

In those days there were no facilities for blood transfusion in Kuala Kangsar. In fact, during the six years that I spent in Singapore as a medical student I did not see a single blood transfusion and the only method of combating haemorrhage was to infuse normal saline into the vein of a bleeding patient.

This method was adopted by Dr. Rowan, the European medical officer, in trying to save the injured twin's life, but the haemorrhage was apparently so severe that he died before an operation could be performed to repair or remove his ruptured internal organ.

In 1921, after Tengku Mohamed and several other players had left school, we drew with the Penang Free School.

In 1922, we were beaten by a margin that I cannot now remember and in 1923, when I played left half-back for the College, we were ignominiously beaten 5–0.

I remember that, in order to boost our morale and to guarantee success, the captain had engaged a *pawang* from Padang Rengas, who provided each member of the College team with an amulet and also ordered that a candle over which he had muttered appropriate incantations should be lighted at the back of the College building and kept alight during the match.

When, after the match, he was taken to task for the failure of his magic to ensure our success, he explained that our defeat was due to the fact that the candle had been blown out by the wind during the match. As at the best of times, it was virtually impossible to keep a candle lighted in the open air for any length of time, I suppose he knew beforehand that the candle would most likely be blown out long before the match would be over.

Had we won the game, no doubt he would have attributed our success to the efficacy of his amulets, regardless of whether the candle had been blown out or not.

I played very badly in this match, for the Free School right-winger, a little bloke with a close-cropped head of hair was such a fast runner that he nearly always outpaced me. Not only did he outpace me, but in a struggle to rob him of the ball, I fell down heavily and sprained my right wrist-joint so badly that I was unable to play hockey for the rest of my time at the College.

In 1924, the year before I left school, we were again defeated, 3–1.

Besides the annual match with the Penang Free School, which was looked forward to with great interest not only by the boys and members of the College staff, but also by outside football fans of Kuala Kangsar, we had regular interhouse matches in football, hockey and cricket.

There was very keen competition between these houses, in football especially, and Mr. Jermyn, Captain Rooke-Cowell and Mr. Wheeler never failed to turn up and act as cheerleaders for their houses during interhouse matches.

The annual athletic sports was another event very much looked forward to by all the boys, not only by the prospective participants, but by spectators as well.

For a couple of years after my admission to the College, Tengku Mohamed was the champion athlete of the school, to be succeeded after he left school, by Syed Nordin, Ahmad bin Mahmud (later Dato' Ahmad of Klang) and in 1924 by one of my close friends, Abdul Aziz bin Tahir, who had the distinction of being, at the same time, the head prefect, football captain and platoon sergeant in the Cadet Corps.

But whoever became the champion athlete, year after year, my cousin, Mohamed Salleh bin Haji Sulaiman, won the sack race and Abdullah bin Haji Dahan won the obstacle race.

I wasn't much of an athlete and the only event that I tried to compete in was the one-mile race but I was soon eliminated in the preliminary heat.

I was in a small way compensated for my failure by being a member of the house team that won the tug-of-war. But the prize that I won was a cotton shirt, a mere bagatelle compared to the trophies received by winners of individual events.

Two of the events for competition, peculiar to the Malay College athletic sports of my time were "Kicking the Football" and "Throwing the Cricket ball" and I have never ceased to wonder why they have never been included in the many athletic meets that I have since witnessed.

Mr. Wheeler, who had proved himself a first-class chemistry and mathematics master, was not destined to remain long at the M.C.K.K. for on 16 August 1924, he was transferred to the Sultan Idris Training College, Tanjong Malim, as assistant master.

I have stated elsewhere that Mr. Wheeler was a remarkable man. This is true not only in his capacity as a teacher, but as a scientist pure and simple. I don't exactly know how he managed to do it or when and where he did it, but the Malayan Civil List of 1938 showed that he had the additional degrees of M. Sc. and Ph. D., presumably of London University. In any case, by virtue of his Ph. D. degree he was later known as Dr. Wheeler.

Had there been a University of Malaya at that time it was not unlikely that he would have been considered a strong candidate for a lectureship to start with and that he would have probably ended his academic career as a professor.

As it happened, the last post that he held before the Second World War was that of acting inspector of schools, Penang.

Immediately before his transfer to the S.I.T.C., Tanjong

Malim, the boys of the Cambridge classes organised a farewell tea-party for him to which the headmaster and members of the teaching staff were invited.

I was entrusted by the boys with the task of writing a suitable farewell address to be read at the conclusion of the tea-party.

I wrote it in Malay as a sort of oblique compliment to him for having succeeded in getting the degree of B.A. Hons. of London University in Malay Studies.

We had the speech printed at a printing press in Taiping and beautifully framed and I had to read it at the conclusion of the tea-party and present it to him.

In his reply, Mr. Wheeler said he was genuinely sorry to leave the College as he had enjoyed teaching chemistry and mathematics to the boys. He added he would always cherish the memory of his rather short service at the College.

Mr. L.D. Whitfield, who held a first-class honours degree in mathematics of Dublin University (or T.C.D. [Trinity College Dublin] as its alumni proudly call it), replaced Mr. Wheeler as mathematics master, but as he was not qualified in chemistry, its teaching came to an abrupt end and was only resumed after the Second World War, when biology and physics were added to the curriculum to make up the trio of science subjects.

On 1 May 1924, Mr. R.P.S. Walker, an Oxford University graduate was posted to the College to strengthen the staff position.

He was a tall, slim, elegantly dressed young man of twenty-five, a former champion hurdler of Oxford University. Up to 13 December 1924, when he returned to England on full-pay leave, he taught us Shakespeare's historical play *Richard II* in the Senior Cambridge Class.

This play was one of the two plays of Shakespeare which had been set for the English Literature paper of that year together with the *Poems of Matthew Arnold* and *Speeches of Edmund Burke*.

We were required to answer only two questions on each of these three books.

The other play was *Macbeth* and as a whole paper would be set on it, Mr. Bazell took us through it in his usual masterly fashion.

Although Mr. Walker was quite a good teacher, his handwriting was a mere scrawl compared to Mr. Bazell's. One day, after Mr. Walker had left the class at the conclusion of an hour's

teaching, it was Mr. Bazell's turn to teach us *Macbeth* or *Speeches of Edmund Burke* or *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*.

As soon as he saw Mr. Walker's handwriting on the blackboard, Mr. Bazell pointed to it and asked, "Whose is that chimera?"

The health of the College boys was looked after by the government medical officer, in the early part of my time at the College by Dr. Rowan and later by Dr. C.E. Cobb.

Dr. Rowan was not an Englishman, as evidenced by the fact that he pronounced the word "tongue" as "tong", but whether he was a Scotsman or an Irishman, no one could tell me and as I was too shy to ask any of the European masters, his nationality remains a mystery to me to this day.

In any case, he was quite a nice man, much liked by the boys. He was always welcome to join the boys in their games of football and hockey.

Unlike Dr. Rowan, his successor Dr. C.E. Cobb kept himself aloof from the College and never joined the boys in any game. He was a handsome and reserved young man of about twenty-five, of middle height, who always wore a hard-winged collar and bow tie.

Mrs. Cobb, the lady medical officer at the Women's Hospital, Kuala Kangsar, was a thin young woman who could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as beautiful.

Apparently she and her husband did not get on well together and were later divorced. Later still, she married Mr. H.R. Carey, who succeeded Mr. Bazell as the fourth headmaster of the College.

I met Dr. Cobb in Seremban later under more distressing circumstances. This was when, as a second year medical student I suffered a nervous breakdown, was given leave of absence from medical school and handed over for treatment to the tender mercies of Dr. Cobb, who was now the acting State Medical and Health Officer of Negri Sembilan.

We were asked to give specimens of stools for microscopic examination and those of us found infested with hookworms were given doses of the nauseating oil of chenopodium to swallow and those infested with round-worms given santonin powder which gave us yellow vision.

The head monitor was entrusted with the responsibility of giving the extremely bitter strychnine tonic mixture to those of

the boys who were suffering from general debility and the not so unpleasant iron mixture to those who were pale and diagnosed as suffering from anaemia.

On the table next to the head monitor's bed were lined up great big bottles of these mixtures and tonics.

Dental treatment was carried out by Mr. Simoyama, a well known Japanese dentist from Ipoh, who visited the College once a week.

He had had installed in one of the cubicles next to the prayer room, formerly occupied by the sons of rulers, a dental chair and other items of dental equipment. There he did his extractions and fillings.

He was a stocky, broad-chested man of thirty-five who always wore cream-coloured Fuji silk shirts with bow ties and who, like Dr. Rowan, pronounced the word "tongue" as "tong".

Later it was found more convenient for him to treat the boys at his well-equipped dental surgery at Ipoh and safer for the boys from the point of view of ensuring asepsis. The boys naturally enjoyed these periodical jaunts to the biggest town in Perak.

I have already mentioned that after sitting the Senior Cambridge Examination and while waiting for the results, we stayed on for another term at the College and were taught additional mathematics by Mr. Whitfield in the College Hall.

When the results were announced later, my friend Megat Khas and I found ourselves at the top of the list of passers as the first and second boys.

As there were, for that year, six vacancies for the probationerships of the Malay Administrative Service which, then as now, were coveted by most Malay boys, we knew that we stood a very good chance of being selected as probationers.

But my friend and I were determined to blaze a new trail by taking up the study of medicine and we were encouraged by Mr. Bazell who said that by doing so we were a credit to the Malays and were setting a good example not only to the College boys, but also to Malay boys studying at other English secondary schools in Malaya.

When the time came for us to leave school, we were greatly saddened by the prospect of having to part from our school friends and our teachers.

For my part, the prospect of leaving the College was especial-

ly poignant in that I had come to look upon Mr. Bazell as a sort of surrogate father, for orphaned at the age of five, I had always felt acutely the need of a wise and loving father to guide me during my boyhood, and I counted myself very lucky indeed that during the three-and-a-half years of that difficult period of my adolescence, I was exposed to the influence of this great headmaster.

Mr. Bazell seemed to have sensed our sorrow at having to leave school and on the night before our train journey back to our homes, he invited us school leavers to a rice and curry dinner at his quarters.

Dressed in black Malay *baju, seluar* and *kain samping*, but bareheaded, he welcomed us to his quarters and, to cheer us up, was especially gay that night.

After the dinner, over coffee in his drawing room, he advised us how to conduct our lives in our future careers. He stressed the importance of self-control and cautioned us against the wiles of ladies of easy virtue.

He said that we should strive hard to attain our aims and ambitions in life and that should we fail at the first attempt, we should try hard again and yet again.

For some of us that was not the last time we saw our revered headmaster.

When, three months after my graduation in March 1932, I was posted as an assistant medical officer to the District Hospital, Taiping, I broke the journey to Taiping at Kuala Kangsar, and called on him at his quarters at 7.00 p.m.

I found him occupied in teaching English to Cikgu Mahmud bin Jintan, the then Malay master at the College, to enable the latter to sit the Senior Cambridge Examination.

He was very pleased to see me and wished me every success in my future career as a government doctor. And on five subsequent occasions in my life I visited and was welcomed by him at his cottage at the village of Cannington four miles from the town of Bridgewater, Somerset.

My last visit to him was in August 1974, accompanied by my son, Yusof. We stayed the night at his cottage. He had then just turned ninety, but was amazingly, or as he expressed it, absurdly fit.

I have referred above to my having translated Wilkinson's article on Sungai Ujong. This work was actually done in 1922

when I was in Class IIB, the equivalent of the present day Form III.

My uncle Ibrahim, who was then a master at the Sultan Idris Teachers Training College, had borrowed from Za'ba the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* containing Wilkinson's article.

During one of the College vacations he asked me to translate it into Malay. It was quite a formidable task for a boy of fourteen to undertake, for my command of English was then quite inadequate to cope with it.

However, I struggled manfully to finish the job in good time and with the aid of Winstedt's *English-Malay Dictionary*, managed to do so by the end of the College vacation.

In retrospect, I realise that it wasn't a very accurate translation, but it was, I imagine good enough for my uncle to use in the acrimonious *adat* controversy which had begun to rear its ugly head in the hitherto peaceful Bugis settlement of Linggi, poisoning the very atmosphere of the place.

I thus became, at so young an age, indirectly involved in this controversy and it seemed natural that after my graduation as a doctor in 1932, I should become more and more directly involved in it.

In the process of delving into the past history of Linggi, in association with Cikgu Abdul Samad bin Zainudin, a cousin of my mother's, the headteacher of the Rantau Malay School, I managed to gather a great deal of documentary evidence as well as oral traditions which convinced me that the arbitrary imposition of the matrilineal system of electing Inche Hassan bin Pok to the post of Dato' Muda of Linggi (which had been vacant for twenty years) in 1932 was diametrically opposed to the true *adat* of Linggi.

The then British Resident, Mr. J.W.W. Hughes, who was not supposed to interfere in questions of Malay custom and religion, lent his support to Klana Makmur's arbitrary and unjust action in imposing the alien Minangkabau matrilineal system on the Bugis people of Linggi.

By tradition, the Dato' Muda Linggi was not considered a vassal of the Dato' Klana of Sungai Ujong, but was merely said to be responsible to both Dato' Bandar and Dato' Klana. Within the territory of Linggi he wielded absolute power. As the saying describing his autonomy puts it, he was:

Bergajah tunggal
Memancung putus,
Meliang tembus,
Memakan labis.*

Despite many appeals made by the Linggi people to the Dato' Klana, the Yang di Pertuan Besar and successive British Residents in the pre-*merdeka* days for a restitution of their true *adat*, the late Dato' Klana Makmur and the incumbent Dato' Klana Kassim turned a deaf ear to their appeals. After the death of Dato' Muda Hassan bin Pok in 1936, three subsequent Dato' Mudas were arbitrarily appointed by the Dato' Klana in accordance with the matrilineal system. So far the four Linggi chiefs thus appointed have failed miserably to win the respect and loyalty that a traditional Malay chief should receive from his wards (*anak-anak buah*). In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the chiefs have not been recognised by the vast majority of the Linggi people. Nor have these four Dato' Mudas rendered any service or help whatsoever to the people.

There appears to be no indication that this bitter controversy will be resolved so long as the Dato' Klana arrogates to himself the function of deciding what the true *adat* of Linggi should be and continues to turn a deaf ear to the appeals of the Linggi people for a restitution of their original *adat*.

I have so far forgotten to mention that, about the time when I was promoted to the Junior Cambridge Class, I was alternately bullied and befriended by Raja Ahmad Tajudin bin Sultan Abdullah.

He was a year older than myself, but was a much bigger and taller boy. In appearance he looked so dirty and unkempt that one could hardly believe that he was the son of a sultan. For he only took a bath, brushed his teeth, cut his finger and toe nails and washed his shirts and sarongs about once a week. In a word, he belonged to the "Society the Great Unwashed" and for that reason he stank like a polecat or *musang jebat*.

Many years later when I read the minor American classic *A Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, a schoolboy character named Ackerley in this novel forcibly reminded me of my bully, Raja Ahmad Tajudin.

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* See J.M. Gullick's, "Sungai Ujong", *JMBRAS*, 1949, p. 61.

His way of bullying me was to thrust his sharp elbow so hard into one side of my body that I squirmed with agonising pain. And then, on the next day perhaps, he would befriend me by giving me books to read which he had taken without permission from the library of his much older half-brother, Raja Sir Chulan, the Raja di Hilir of Perak.

I remember that the first book he gave me to read was Robert Louis Stevenson's *Virginibus Puerisque*. After I had read it, he gave me Thackeray's *Novels by Eminent Hands*, Bulwer Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompei*, etc.

It happened that during the morning break one day he jabbed his elbow so hard that I actually cried out in pain and in my desperation I caught hold of a chair and, lifting it up, was about to crash it on his head when Kamarudin bin Omar, a senior boy and brother-in-law of Za'ba, interposed himself between us, thus saving Raja Ahmad Tajudin from a severe injury to his head.

I told Kamarudin of his repeated bullying of me. After giving him a severe tongue-lashing, Kamarudin reported the matter to Megat Yunus, the head prefect who, in his turn, severely hauled him over the coals and warned him that should he continue to bully me he would be reported to the headmaster.

After that warning by the head perfect, who was known to be very stern and strict, Raja Ahmad Tajudin ceased to bully me, but continued his good work of supplying me with books to read from his brother's library.

Other celebrities besides King Rama of Siam visited Kuala Kangsar during my time.

Sir Laurence Guillemard, the Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner for the Malay States was the next V.V.I.P. to pay us a visit.

I remember this visit particularly well because on that occasion Mr. Bazell took the opportunity to show His Excellency a specimen of Megat Khas's handwriting.

Mr. Bazell had a penchant for clear, legible handwriting and Megat Khas's calligraphy most resembled Mr. Bazell's in its beautifully clear, rounded form.

I have in my possession many letters written by both Mr. Bazell and Megat Khas. They are definitely worth preserving not only for their sentimental value, but also as fine specimens of penmanship.

Next, there was the visit of Mr. Frank C. Sands, the Scout commissioner for Malaya, who inspected the Boy Scout troop under its first Scout master, Cikgu Ahmad Jalaludin.

We had been thoroughly rehearsed by our Scout master in the various items of Scout craft to be shown to the commissioner during his visit, so that when he finally came to Kuala Kangsar and inspected the troop he was much impressed by the efficient manner in which we performed. He said so in his speech and Cikgu Jalaludin and all of us Boy Scouts felt tremendously "bucked up" by Mr. Sand's words of praise and encouragement.

Of Perak royalty, Sultan Iskandar was naturally the most frequent visitor to the College. He was invited to every Speech and Prize-giving Day, at which His Highness gave away the prizes.

He also attended almost every athletic sports meet and the three plays of Shakespeare which were staged in the College dining hall during my time at the College.

The Raja Muda of Perak, Raja Abdul Aziz, was practically never seen at any College function of my time, as he resided at Telok Anson.

Next to him in the line of succession to the Perak Throne was the Raja Bendahara Yusof. He was undoubtedly the most popular of the three titled Rajas, not only among the boys, but also among the teaching staff, European and Malay alike.

He generally went about in a rickshaw rather than a motor-car which he could very well have afforded. It was an oddity of his that whenever he met a College boy on the road to town, he would ask his rickshaw puller to stop. He would then ask the boy his name and on the boy telling him, he would smilingly exclaim, "O, glorious name!"

Should he meet the same boy a couple of days later, he would again stop his rickshaw and ask the boy the same question, seemingly having forgotten in two days' time what the boy's name was. On again being told by the boy what it was he would exclaim, "O, wonderful name!"

He would suddenly appear in the College dining-hall at dinner time and partake of the simple fare provided at the common dining table, disdaining to accept anything extra, more suited to his rank and dignity, that the Chinese cook cringingly offered to prepare for him. He would then talk affably to the boys amidst whom he was seated.

Although it might be considered infra dig for him to behave in this way, he used to say that, as an Old Boy of the College, he did not think that he was lowering himself in freely mixing with his successors at the College. Thus it was that the Raja Bendahara endeared himself to the boys and the masters alike.

Of the Raja di Hilir, Raja Chulan (later Raja Sir Chulan), we saw quite a lot, as he was a member of the Board of Governors of the College and quite often visited the College and attended football matches between the College team and that of the Penang Free School, the team of the Ipoh European Club or the local Ellerton Club.

He was a well-built, broad-shouldered six-footer, dressed always in a closed white-drill jacket and trousers. He never appeared without wearing a round black *songkok*. He spoke perfect English and, although he was the third titled Raja in the line of succession to the Perak Throne, he volunteered to do the work of a magistrate in Kuala Kangsar.

He rode to and from the court in his chauffeur-driven, deluxe, red-painted T-model Ford car, the lamps and other fittings of which were made of brass and which his driver assiduously polished every day with Brasso so that they gleamed and glinted in the bright sunshine.

A younger brother of Sir Chulan, Raja Abdul Hamid, was only slightly smaller than his famous brother. He was dressed, as his brother was, in white-drill closed jacket, trousers and black cap. He was very much in demand as a football referee and it was he who refereed the annual soccer matches between the Malay College and the Free School during my time at the College. It was characteristic of him that, while refereeing these matches, he never took off his jacket or *songkok*.

Raja Harun ibni Sultan Idris, the Raja Kechil Sulong, never attended any College functions, although six of his children were pupils of the College.

I caught an occasional glimpse of him in my wanderings in Kuala Kangsar town and its environs. He was a short but handsome man of about forty who wore a close-cropped moustache. I was told that his six children who were schooling at the College were by three different wives. Perhaps the reason why he never attended any College functions was to avoid any possible accusation by one of his wives that he was partial to the sons of another wife.

Raja Abdul Rashid, the Raja Kechil Tengah, was the A.D.C. to his brother, Sultan Iskandar. He was often to be seen flashing past the College playing field in his sports car with Raja Kimas, his third wife. She was the daughter of Sir Chulan, the Raja di Hilir, and was one of the most beautiful ladies of the raja class in a state famed for its beautiful women, and many of us College boys used to gape in wonder at her exquisite beauty as the sports car driven by her husband flashed past us while we were playing football in the field fronting the road.

By his first wife, who had died, Raja Abdul Rashid had a son, Raja Soran. He was, as far as I can recollect, the only grandson of Sultan Idris who was a dunce and had to be superannuated.

The rest did quite well on the whole, while two of them, Raja Aman Shah and Raja Shahar Shah, if not brilliant, were definitely above average in intelligence.

After the death of his first wife, Raja Abdul Rashid married the widowed mother of my good friend, Ibrahim bin Abdul Karim alias Ibrahim Ah Chong. He had no children by her.

Sultan Iskandar had an adopted son, Raja Lope Rashid, who, after a spell at the College, was sent by His Highness to further his secondary education in England. He was later admitted to the University of Oxford.

On his return to Malaya, to set an example for other young Malay rajas to follow, he joined the Malay Regiment as one of the first batch of twenty-five recruits to be trained by Colonel Bruce. He retired from the Regiment as a Brigadier-general.

After his retirement from the Malay Regiment, he was appointed Lord Chamberlain and later the title of Raja Kechil Tengah was conferred upon him by the present Sultan of Perak.

I have a vague recollection of another Raja Lope, a thin vociferous sort of boy who failed to make the grade and had to leave school.

Before I conclude the account of my secondary education at the Malay College, it is only proper that I should put on record the history of this prestigious secondary school.

In any objective study of the College it is pertinent to pose the question whether it was at all necessary to set up a special boarding school for the sons and close relatives of the Malay rulers and chiefs in order to encourage the Malays to send their children to English schools.

A clear and, in my view, convincing answer to this question is

that it was expedient to do so in the circumstances prevailing at the beginning of the present century.

In those days the majority of Malay parents were reluctant to send their children to English schools in the mistaken belief that it was sinful to be educated in the language of the Christian English.

This belief was then being disseminated among the Malays by the *orang-orang alim* or *ulema* in all the Malay States. They were openly preaching that it was against Islamic law (*haram*) to send Muslim children to English schools.

At the Roman Catholic Mission schools of those days the study of the Gospel was obligatory for all pupils. It was this part of the curriculum that Malay parents objected to most of all, for even to read the Bible was considered sinful, let alone to study it day after day.

As for the other types of schools, such as the Anglo-Chinese schools of the American Methodist Mission and even the government English schools, although they made no overt attempts to proselytise non-Christian pupils, the medium of instruction was still English and that was sufficient for the *ulema* to stigmatise education in them as *haram*.

I remember distinctly Lebai Abass, one of the trio of *orang alim* in Linggi inveighing against English education during my boyhood. Later, when I took up the study of medicine he bluntly told me that I was devoting myself to a life of sin (*maksiat*).

He added that had I chosen to *menuntut ilmu*, I would have by then become an *orang alim*. By the expression *menuntut ilmu* he obviously meant to study religious knowledge.

The equating of *ilmu* exclusively with religious knowledge was indeed the widely practised religious teaching of the early years of the present century. Secular knowledge was not included in the definition of the word *ilmu*.

Another instance of this widespread prejudice against education in English was when Za'ba became a pupil of St. Paul's Institution, Seremban, against the wishes of his father. His father became very angry with him and disowned him for his open defiance of paternal authority.

He wanted Za'ba to study the Arabic language and pursue religious knowledge under Lebai Abass of Linggi and afterwards proceed to Mecca to further his religious education with a

view to becoming a beturbaned *kampung orang alim*.

There can be no doubt that it was the powerful and pervasive influence of the *kampung lebai* and *ulema* that stood in the way of Malay boys joining English schools in the desired number, and I can recall several pathetic instances of bright Malay boys of my generation being prevented from continuing their education at the Malay College or St. Paul's Institution, Seremban. The same boys later became rubber tappers, *padi* planters, odd-job men in the *kampung*, policemen, peons, and forest guards.

That then was the prevailing climate of opinion among the ordinary *kampung* Malays and only the unorthodox or the heretical dared to flout the religious injunctions (*fetwa*) that were from time to time issued by the *alim* and *ulema*, the burden of which was that education in an English school was *haram*.

Therefore it was considered necessary that the sultans and chiefs should take the lead against the embattled front presented by the religious orders.

The sultans, being constitutionally the heads of the Islamic religion in their states, were naturally the proper persons to take the lead as the state *mufti*, *kadi* and religious teachers were their appointees and got their letters of appointment *(tauliah)* from their royal highnesses.

The known opposition of the sultans to the *obiter dicta* and *fetwas* of the *orang alim* and *ulema* against English education would be certain to silence or, at least, mute their occasionally strident objections.

The expressed wish of the rulers, headed by Sultan Idris of Perak, was therefore the ostensible *raison d'etre* for this exclusive, boarding school, although Mr. R.J. Wilkinson originated the whole idea.*

Possessing a first-class honours degree of the University of Cambridge which would have made him eligible for appointment in the Home Civil Service or the I.C.S. (Indian Civil Service), this great Englishman chose instead to join the Straits Settlements Civil Service in 1889. For three years from 1903, however, he served as the inspector of schools, F.M.S.

It was during this period that he conceived the idea of setting

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*See footnotes by W.R. Roff on pp. 52 and 56 of Haji Abdul Majid's autobiography *The Wandering Thoughts of a Dying Man*.

up a boarding school for the sons and close relatives of the Malay rulers and chiefs.

Sir John Anderson, the Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner for the Malay States, however, was not at all keen to support Mr. Wilkinson's proposal.

It was only after Mr. Wilkinson had persuaded Mr. W.H. Treacher, the then Resident-General of the F.M.S., of the feasibility of his project, that they were able to convince the High Commissioner of the soundness of the idea. Even then Sir John Anderson only agreed to the proposal on a trial basis on the condition that Mr. Hargreaves, the very able headmaster of the Penang Free School, should be transferred to Kuala Kangsar to head the new school, and that he was to be given a grace period of three years to make a success of the school.

Thus it was that the Malay Residential School, the precursor of the Malay College, was set up at Kuala Kangsar in 1905.

Kuala Kangsar was chosen as the site of the school for the reason that its most ardent supporter was Sultan Idris, unquestionably Perak's ablest and most farsighted ruler.

So as to enable Mr. Wilkinson to see to it that his brain-child did not die a premature death or slowly suffocate in the *tidak apa* atmosphere of official indifference, Mr. Wilkinson was transferred to Perak as Secretary to the Resident.

By an unexpected, but in the circumstances lucky coincidence, the British Resident of Perak at that time happened to be Mr. E.W. (later Sir Earnest) Birch, the son of J.W.W. Birch, the first Resident of Perak, who was assassinated at Pasir Salak in 1875.

He has been described as "a man of great energy and an attractive personality". But what was even more significant about Mr. Earnest Birch was that "he made Perak the centre of the pro-Malay campaign". With Mr. Wilkinson, he led the small coterie of British officers who shared "a common concern for the Malays" and included, among others, R.O. Winstedt, E. Nathan, C.W.C. Parr, A. Caldecott and the two Maxwell brothers, W.G. and C.N. Maxwell.

From its lowly beginnings in a plank-walled, *atap*-roofed school house, the school flourished under the able guidance of its first headmaster, Mr. William Hargreaves, its student numbers increased, and when the impressive new building of the Big School (*Sekolah Besar*) was completed in 1909, its name

was changed to Malay College, and the idea of "educating and training the sons of the rajas and higher classes on the lines of the English public schools" was explicitly stated for the first time and adopted as the official policy.

The Preparatory or Prep. School *(Sekolah Kecil)*, built afterwards to accommodate the two lowest classes, completed the apotheosis of the Malay College as the "Eton of Malaya", or so it was dubbed by sundry British officials.

In remains for me to describe the actual conditions in the College during my five years as a pupil there and to try and draw thumbnail character sketches of some of my contemporaries during those five unforgettable years.

In a school which was avowedly modelled on the English public school, it seemed rather paradoxical that a special school dress or uniform was not devised to put a final stamp on the English public school idea, as exemplified in the Eton Jacket and collar and other distinctive uniforms worn by schoolboys at other public schools in England.

In the Malay College of my time, we wore Malay *baju* and sarong and, of course shoes. In class we were generally bareheaded and only wore our *songkok* at the Friday and daily prayers.

On formal occasions, such as the annual speech and prize-giving day, we put on full Malay dress with *seluar* and *kain samping*, but wore *songkok* instead of the more formal *tanjak* or *tengkolok*.

Only when sitting the Cambridge Examinations at the King Edward VII School, Taiping, did we wear Western dress complete with neckties.

A class in session then presented a variegated appearance, the richer boys wearing coloured silk *baju* and sarong, while the rest of us had to make do with drab cotton *baju* with *kain pelekat* sarongs.

There were quite a few school fops in my time, among them my cousin, Syed Ahmad bin Syed Mohamed, nicknamed Syed Ahmad Old Man to distinguish him from Syed Ahmad Sawi, the other Negri Sembilan Syed Ahmad.

He was engaged to Sharifah Hamidah, the granddaughter of Tengku Syed Hassan of Seremban, the wealthy landowner after whom Jalan Tunku Hassan in the town of Seremban was named, and received from him a liberal monthly allowance,

which enabled him to vie with the sons of rulers and undangs in the splendour of his dress.

In class he used to wear expensive silk *baju* of the gayest colours and costly handwoven Trengganu sarongs of the *Empat Sekarap* variety, his silky hair combed backwards and dressed with fragrant eau-de-Quinine.

He was not only a notable dandy but an outstanding scholar, for in the last government Seventh Standard of 1920, he was one of the three boys who were awarded First Class Certificates. The two other boys who distinguished themselves were Raja Musa bin Raja Mahadi and Mohamed Yusof bin Mahmud.

His command of English was quite remarkable and in an attempt to excel Abdullah bin Haji Dahan, the future Undang of Rembau, who had written a very good article entitled "Farewell to the Alma Mater" in the first number of the College Magazine, in the second number he wrote an article which was much praised by his classmates.

It was written in an ornate style of English, replete with long words of Latin derivation. Mr. Bazell who, in teaching English, always emphasised the importance of using shorter words of English origin, remarked that his style of writing resembled that of Dr. Johnson, who in defining the word "bug", described it as "a noxious insect that performs nightly perambulations to the discomfort of sleeping humanity".

In later life, he was to resign his post as Co-operative Officer, Negri Sembilan and Malacca, to become the Dato' Muda of Linggi.

During the early part of my time at the College, there was a small plank-walled, zinc-roofed shop or rather restaurant in the College compound. The owner, Ah Siew, sold fried *mahmee* and *mee hoon*, beef steak, chicken-chop, bread and butter and *serikaya*. An older man sold various kinds of iced drinks and the cheaper ice-balls for those who could not afford the more expensive drinks. And in the late evenings, hawkers used to station themselves outside the College fence, tempting the boys with *satay* and other comestibles.

There was one particular hawker, Ah Pek by name, an emaciated opium-smoker who seemed to be in the last stages of decrepitude. Enfeebled by long-standing opium-smoking, he staggered along, carrying on a *kandar* stick two large shallow baskets containing an assortment of *kacang goreng*, *kacang tumbuk*,

various kinds of *bepang*, slices of pineapple, nutmeg and unripe mangoes.

His dirty and begrimed condition did not deter the boys from buying his nutmegs and unripe mangoes. There and then they would pare and eat them with chillied Chinese ketchup, provided *gratis* by old Ah Pek.

The memory of old Ah Pek has never failed to evoke gusts of laughter from College Old Boys of my time whenever I reminded them of the dear old opium-smoker.

When Mr. Bazell got to know of this daily hawking outside the College fence, he hounded old Ah Pek and the rest of the hawkers from the College precincts. He said it was infra dig for us College boys to patronise hawkers, quite apart from the fact that old Ah Pek was a dirty old opium-smoker who might be suffering from T.B., and so might infect us.

On Sundays, however, we were permitted to go to town, and it was quite on the cards that the boys would visit that section of the town on the right bank of the Perak River, known to them as "New York". There were several stalls there selling *bubur kacang*, *bubur gandum*, *cendol*, coffee, tea and cakes.

They would help themselves to either of the *bubur* enriched with lumps of *pulut* or durian. Alternatively they would proceed to the Belakang Balai coffee shop and there glut themselves with platefuls of *pulut* eaten with beef curry. They would conclude their meals with a cup of coffee or tea and the confirmed smokers would not scruple about puffing their cigarettes.

The richer boys would frequent a restaurant famous for its beef steaks and chicken-chops and the more fastidious would go to Guan Moh's shop to buy chocolates and sweets.

From 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. on either Friday or Sunday, I forget which day it was, we were taught Koran-reading by the then Chief *Kadi*, Tuan Haji Mohamed Nor, and *Bilal* Manap, the *muezzin* of the neighbouring mosque.

Both had magnificent voices and were famous in those days for the artistry with which they intoned passages from the Koran or sang the *kasidah*.

In addition to Koran-reading we were taught the *Sifat Dua Puluh* i.e. the Twenty Attributes of God and the Fundamentals of Faith.

Generally *Bilal* Manap would take each boy in turn and teach him how to read the Koran and after he had finished

reading the Koran, Tuan Haji Mohamed Nor would take him over and catechise him on the Twenty Attributes of God or the Fundamentals of Faith until he was word-perfect.

Soon, however, Haji Mohamed Nor retired from government service as Chief *Kadi* and not many months later, *Bilal* Manap fell ill and died.

They were succeeded by Tuan Haji Khalid, the *imam* of the neighbouring mosque, an Arabic scholar and religious teacher of considerable distinction. He had studied in Mecca for fifteen years and knew my cousin Haji Mustafa, one of the three *orang alim* of Linggi.

Bilal Manap having died, he did the teaching alone and added Mohamedan Law to the rather limited religious curriculum on which Haji Mohamed Nor had based his teaching.

This meant we were taught the Islamic laws of marriage, divorce, polygamy, endowment (*wakaf*), adoption, will-making (*wasiat*) and division of property after a person's decease (*ilmu faraid*), all of which we found interesting as they had to do with everyday practical problems in the *kampung*.

Needless to say, his teaching was spiced with the inevitable subject of what acts and thoughts were permissible (*halal*), forbidden (*haram*), unclean (*makruh*) and proper (*harus*).

Haji Khalid was by no means an austere religious teacher. He had a sense of humour, an attribute not usually to be found among the run-of-the-mill religious teachers.

Occasionally he was not averse from referring to the delicate subject of sexual relations between husband and wife during the fasting month. He said that it was quite permissible to break one's fast with the act of sexual intercourse with one's wife.

The effectiveness of Tuan Haji Khalid's teaching was reflected in the much increased number of boys who meticulously observed the five daily prayers, at which Syed Nordin, the head prefect, generally acted as *imam* and Yazid as *bilal*.

The latter had a very retentive memory and could faultlessly recite the two long Koranic *surah*, *Sab-bihi* and *Hal-ata* generally intoned by the *imam* at Friday prayers so that after Syed Nordin had left school, Yazid the *bilal* became Yazid the *imam*.

The College had a fine library. There were deluxe editions of the works of William Shakespeare, illustrated with photographs of Henry Irving, Ellen Terry and other famous Shakespearian

actors and actresses in the roles in which they had gained fame; and of the two great Victorian novelists, Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray.

The other Victorian novelists like George Eliot, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Wilkie Collins and Bulwer Lytton, were represented by cheaper editions of their works in the Everyman Library or Collins Classics series. One-volume editions of the major English poets were also available in the library.

The College librarian of my time was Abdullah bin Haji Dalan, for some reason or other nicknamed Abdullah Sailor. He was an omnivorous reader who had read many of the books in the library, particularly the works of Thomas Carlyle and the novels of Charles Dickens. He was also very fond of reading articles in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* dealing with Islam and philosophy.

He had not, however, been content with merely reading these books but had underlined passages in them and written on many other pages such remarks as "absolute truth!", "*nota bene*" and "nonsense", etc.

After he had left school, Mr. Bazell by chance discovered these underlinings and marginal comments. He was displeased and said as these books were the property of the College, the quondam librarian had no right to deface them in this way.

My cousin Yazid and I were appointed joint librarians two years later and we lost no time in sampling the literary fare spread before us.

I remember that the first book by Rider Haggard that I read was *Alan Quartermain* which I had bought for a dollar at the Kuala Lumpur railway station bookstall on my way back to Kuala Kangsar after one of the school vacations. I was then in Class IIB, the equivalent of the present Form III.

I was so enchanted by reading this romance of incredible supernatural happenings that when I was appointed librarian I embarked upon a course of reading Rider Haggard's highly imaginative stories with gusto. They included *She* and its sequel *Ayesha, King Solomon's Mines* and *Nada the Lily*.

Incidentally, while staying as a guest at an English friend's home at Hastings in August 1974, I was driven to a neighbouring town by one of his sons, who pointed out to me Rider Haggard's house perched on the top of a steep hill. I suppose it was in the rarefied atmosphere of this eagle's eyrie of a house that he

conceived the idea of writing about the incomparable and indestructible beauty of She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed and her reincarnation as Ayesha.

The romances of Rider Haggard and the adventure stories of Jack London, which I devoured, and the works of G.A. Henty and Captain Marryat which Yazid favoured were a much more suitable introduction to the glories of English literature than the cheap Sexton Blake detective novels and the Buffalo Bill stories of the Wild West bought at railway station bookstalls which had been hitherto the staple literary fare with which we had fed our adolescent minds.

It happened that Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* was the novel set for the Senior Cambridge literature paper for the previous year. As I was then in the Junior Cambridge Class, I had no opportunity of listening to Mr. Bazell expounding the greatness of this novel. The senior boys, however, were full of praise for Thackeray's literary style, his realism and so on and so forth. So I proceeded to read *Vanity Fair* with great interest and having read it, began to read *Pendennis*.

One day Mr. Bazell, finding me in the library reading this novel, advised me not to continue reading any more of Thackeray's novels until I was much older, for only then would I be able to appreciate what a great novelist he was. Instead, he advised me to read *Puck of Pook's Hill*, which he lent me from his library. He took the trouble to explain the historical incidents in the story and praised Kipling's style.

I did not find Kipling's fairy tale particularly interesting nor did his style appeal to me very much, although to please Mr. Bazell I pretended to like both. In my spare time I continued to read Thackeray's novels with undiminished pleasure and interest. In fact I was so charmed by Thackeray's style and engrossed in reading his works that I did not then read any of the novels of his rival Charles Dickens, with the exception of his *Christmas Carol*.

It was only later when I was in the second year of the medical course that, to divert myself from the extremely arduous study of anatomy and physiology, I read *The Pickwick Papers* and *David Copperfield* and realised what a great novelist Dickens was.

Since my retirement I have read *Dombey and Son*, *Great Expectations*, *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* and was amazed at the fecundity of his imagination, his descriptive

power, and the many memorable, if grotesque, characters he had created.

However, this new appreciation of Dicken's undoubted greatness as a novelist has not weaned me from my early admiration for Thackeray's delightful style and his realism so that to this day I remain an ardent Thackeray devotee.

One of the minor discomforts of life at the College in those days was the chronic shortage of water. For we had not only to take a bath twice daily, but also to wash our clothes.

Quite often we had to literally scrape the bottom of the water tank to wash ourselves, and on occasions, had to make a foray to the *dobi's* water tank just outside the College compound to take a bath there.

To remedy this state of affairs, a deep well was dug to one side of the College, and a pump installed to draw the water up to enable us to take a shower bath. But very soon the pump, which in any case required very great exertion to work satisfactorily, got out of order so that the well was abandoned and our sporadic raids upon the *dobi's* water tank were resumed.

Electricity was not yet available in Kuala Kangsar in those days, so that the College was lighted by means of large kerosene lamps suspended from the ceilings of the dormitories and classrooms. A Tamil named Moniah tended these lamps, lighting them up and puting them out at night.

Sometimes after "lights out" at 9.30 p.m., having pooled our meagre financial resources and ordered Muthu, the dining hall servant, to buy *bada* or *goreng pisang* and coffee in town, two or three of us would have a "late supper" to supplement the badly cooked College diet.

An unforgettable experience, the memory of which is cherished by all Old Boys of the College, had to do with the picnics we used to enjoy so much at the *mengeloncor* or sliding place.

These *mengeloncor* picnics had, by the time I joined the College, become part and parcel of college life, as it was started way back in the days of the old Malay Residential School and since then, had been held almost every term.

A short train journey brought us to Padang Rengas and a three-mile walk through thick virgin jungle brought us to the sliding place, which was really a slope of smooth rock over which the crystal-clear water of a mountain stream cascaded

down to a shallow pool below.

The slope was about fifty yards from top to bottom and about five yards across. It was down this slippery slope that we delighted to slide on *upeh* pads to the pool below.

There was an element of danger associated with this thrilling sport and, I suppose it was this generally acknowledged ingredient of the sport that accounted for the thrills felt by the boys.

Our science and mathematics master, Mr. Wheeler, was to demonstrate the reality of this danger when, during one of these picnics, he fell down at the top of the slope and knocked his forehead against the rock surface, thereby sustaining a lacerated wound, two inches long, on his forehead.

There was a gush of blood which was soon stanched and Mr. Wheeler's wound was expertly cleaned, dabbed with tincture of iodine, dressed and bandaged by one of the senior boys who had learned his first aid well as a former Boy Scout.

During the rest of the picnic Mr. Wheeler watched with amusement the antics of masters and boys alike as they took their turns to slide down the rock surface, accompanied by shrieks of mingled fear and delight emanating from the younger boys.

In those days, Kuala Kangsar was not an examination centre and we had to sit the Cambridge Examinations at the King Edward VII School, Taiping.

We were accommodated for the occasion at the residence (*Istana*) of the Raja Bendahara, who kindly lent us his Taiping home during the examination days.

Cikgu Ahmad Jalaludin was entrusted by Mr. Bazell with the task of looking after the College candidates. He arranged for a Taiping Malay woman to cook for us. And every evening Mr. Bazell would come over to Taiping in his two-seater car to see for himself how we were getting on.

There was a great deal of eleventh hour cramming which he tried unsuccessfully to discourage. He said we should have left our textbooks and notes in Kuala Kangsar rather than fuddle our brains with the last-minute cramming. Needless to say, very few of the boys followed his advice, and I don't think the cramming did anybody any good.

When we had got over the initial nervousness of the first day of the examination, we began to look around the examination hall and to really notice the candidates from the King Edward

VII and other Taiping schools.

There were several girls sitting for the Junior Cambridge Examination and among them there was a strikingly beautiful Parsi girl, said to be the daughter of a cloth merchant in town.

She was the object of much ogling by the College boys in the intervals between papers. They were quite unaccustomed to the sight of beautiful adolescent girls in the flesh, for in those days Malay girls were strictly segregated from the early pre-adolescent age of about twelve. In order to look at teenage and marriageable girls, Malay boys had to resort to the undignified and potentially dangerous practice of *mengintai anak dara* (peeping at virgin girls at night).

In fact, Megat Khas and I were foolish enough to scour the town one evening in search of the Parsi cloth merchant's shop and, in the course of doing so, asked a number of Chinese shopkeepers or their assistants where the shop of the father of the *anak dara cantik* (beautiful girl) was. Most of them just brushed aside what must have struck them as an impertinent question asked by two callow Malay youths, but one particular towkay became so irritated by our question that he answered, "How the devil should I know?" or something to that effect. Megat Khas and I became so discouraged and discomfited by the towkay's answer that we ceased to try and locate the Parsi textile merchant's shop.

When the examination was over, some of the boys were depressed, remembering the "howlers" they had perpetrated in answering some of the questions in the examination papers, and some were saddened by the prospect of having to forego the delight and the heart throbs of ogling the beautiful Parsi girl.

Cikgu Ahmad Jalaludin, noticing the prevailing gloom, sought to assuage our depression by taking us to Ghaffur's Malay Opera or *wayang bangsawan* which was then performing in Taiping. Our depression was duly allayed by the beauty of the *seri panggong* (prima donna) and the virtuosity of her acting. And when in the intervals between the acts, a bevy of pretty Malay girls appeared on the stage to dance and sing in what were known as "Extra Turns", we all became convinced that Malay girls had nothing to lose in pulchritude when compared to the Parsi girl, or for that matter, girls of other nationalities.

The antics of the clowns and their farcical remarks made us laugh so much that we forgot the mistakes we had made in an-

swering some of the questions in the examination papers.

It goes without saying that when we returned to the Raja Bendahara's residence, our sleep that night was frequently disturbed by alluring visions of the beautiful prima donna and the "extra-turn" girls of the Ghaffur Malay Opera, who had effectively erased the image of the Parsi girl from our minds.

About a month after our return to the College, this same *bangsawan* troupe, having concluded a successful season at Taiping, came over to Kuala Kangsar, and the College prefects, who had been so enchanted by what they had seen at Taiping, sought Mr. Bazell's permission to go and see its opening performance at Kuala Kangsar.

Mr. Bazell was not pleased to hear our request to see the *wayang*, saying that we would be losing much sleep by staying up late at night. But he was reluctantly persuaded to grant us permission on the condition that we should return to the College and be in bed by 11.00 p.m.

As there were many members of Perak royalty of both sexes in the audience that night and the *bangsawan* tent was jammed with patrons comprising all nationalities, the management spared no pains to choose the best possible *hikayat* to be performed and the actors and actresses were no doubt exhorted to excel themselves in enacting their roles.

We were therefore treated to a much more exciting performance than the one we had seen at Taiping. There was a gorgeously-apparelled Maharaja and his Queen and their beautiful daughter, the Tuan Puteri, and her handsome suitor, the Prince Charming, dressed in their glittering finery. The latter's genie rival thunderously threatened death and destruction to the country should he fail to win the hand of the Princess and the clowns' remarks were extremely funny. We enjoyed the performance so much that we were oblivious of the passing of time.

Two or three of the prefects were in favour of staying on until the conclusion of the story, saying that should the headmaster take us to task for overstaying the allowed period, we were to tell him that the story was so interesting and the acting so exceedingly good that we were totally unconscious of the passage of time.

The majority of the prefects were, however, in favour of leaving at once, as they feared that Mr. Bazell might have posted some other boys to spy on us and to report to him the time of

our arrival back at the College.

So we hurriedly left the large tent in which the *bangsawan* was performing, the Mangalla Theatre having been considered too small for the large audience of all nationalities who in those days were attracted to *bangsawan* performances.

At the stroke of 11.00 p.m., as we arrived at the playing field, there stood Mr. Bazell in the middle of the field, waiting for our return. He said that he was pleased that we had returned on time and advised us to go to bed at once.

That incident was an example of the kind of disciplinarian that Mr. Bazell was, as the headmaster of the M.C.K.K., and I have no doubt that his strictness in enforcing discipline was beneficial to the boys and improved the tone of the school so much that he must be considered one of the two greatest headmasters that the College has ever had, the other of course being Mr. Hargreaves, the first headmaster.

When one comes to consider the headmasterships of Mr. Jermyn and Mr. Bazell from the point of view of the high standards set, particularly the achievements of their pupils, it is fair to record further all-round improvement.

In the field of scholarship, this improvement was demonstrated in the last Government Seventh Standard Examination held in December 1920, when three of the candidates, Raja Musa bin Raja Mahadi, my cousin Syed Ahmad bin Syed Mohamed and Yusof bin Mahmud of Rembau obtained First Class Certificates.

Both Raja Musa and Syed Ahmad were remarkable for their command of English, the former of terse idiomatic English, and the latter of an ornate style of writing characterised by his preference for using long words of Latin derivation.

Unfortunately after having distinguished himself in the Seventh Standard Examination of 1920, Syed Ahmad fell ill and had to leave school in order to undergo treatment at the hill resort of Brastagi, in the highlands of Sumatra.

After his recovery, the year-long absence from school and the taste of freedom from school discipline and the routine of school life made him reluctant to return to the College to continue his education.

He therefore applied for and obtained the post of Malay Cooperative Officer under Mr. Cavendish, the then Director of Cooperation.

Stationed at Seremban, his work entailed the setting up of co-operative societies, urban as well as rural, in Negri Sembilan and Malacca, and afterwards, of advising and supervising these societies.

It was a formidable task in those days as far as rural cooperative societies were concerned, for he had to contend with the opposition of the *kampung orang-orang alim* and *ulema*, who ruled that joining a cooperative society was *haram* because it condoned the practice of giving to its members the *bunga* (interest) on the money they had saved and the charging of interest on the loans granted to them. Interest in those days was interpreted as *riba* (usury) by the *alim* and *ulema*.

In 1935, Syed Ahmad was appointed Dato' Muda Linggi and he had to resign his post of Cooperative Officer of Negri Sembilan and Malacca.

Raja Musa bin Raja Mahadi was a wonderful story-teller. He had an inexhaustible repertoire of funny stories which never grew stale with repeated telling and never failed to evoke side-splitting laughter from his juvenile audience.

I am impelled to record below three of these stories which I remember very well:

The first was the farcical story of the Patani man who boasted of what he had done to *tipu gomen*, that is, to cheat the government, by buying a first-class railway train ticket for his journey to his village, and after ensconcing himself in the third-class coach, he refused to budge from his seat despite the repeated attempts of the ticket collector to persuade him to shift to the first-class carriage.

The second story was the equally farcical one of another Patani man who, during the fasting month, went to a Chinese shop in Kuala Kangsar to buy dates, which Malays generally fancy as the ideal fruit with which to break their fast because date palms grow in Arabia. Seeing a basinful of *assam jawa* (tamarind) in the shop he asked the Chinese shopkeeper to weigh two *katis* of the sour stuff for him, saying to the shopkeeper that Malays were very partial to dates for breaking their fast. In vain did the shopkeeper tell him that the mashed tamarind which so closely resembled mashed dates was *asam jawa* and not *keloma*.

The Patani man insisted that he wished to buy two *katis* of the stuff. The Chinese shopkeeper continued to try to dissuade him from buying the tamarind until the Patani man got tho-

roughly exasperated and shouted to the shopkeeper, "*Aku kata tarok tu, taroklah Cik Baba!*" ("When I say put that, you damn well put it!"). "*Tarok*" is the Patani form of the word "*taruh*" meaning "put", in this instance "put the tamarind in the pan of the *dacing* (weighing scale)".

Raja Musa refrained from telling us what eventually happened when the Patani man returned home and broke his fast by eating the very sour tamarind with coconut gratings, in place of the very sweet dates he thought he had bought.

Patani men were generally chosen as the butts of jokes and subjects of farcical stories by the people of Kuala Kangsar on account of their lack of sophistication, peculiar pronunciation of Malay words and their general unworldliness.

The third story repeatedly told by Raja Musa was that of a Sayong *Tok Aki* (grandpa) who one day took his little grandson across the Perak River in a *sampan* to Kuala Kangsar.

As it was the first time the little boy saw what to him was a great big town, he was naturally agape with wonder and surprise.

When in the course of their perambulation, they walked along the road to Bukit Chandan, the grandfather pointed to the Government House on the hill and told his grandson that it was the house in which *Tuan Resident* stayed whenever he visited Kuala Kangsar, whereupon the little urchin asked his grandpa, "*Tok Aki! Tok Aki! Mana kaya Tok Resident dengan Tok Alah, Tok Alah (Allah)?*" ("Grandpa! Grandpa! Who is richer, the British Resident or Allah?").

The grandfather was annoyed at what to him was his grandson's blasphemous question and irately replied, "*Eh, itu kapior tu!*"

The word "*kapior*" was the way the people of Sayong pronounced the word "*kafir*", meaning "infidel". It was intended as a rebuke to his grandson for daring to compare the infidel British Resident to Allah.

The Perak River at Kuala Kangsar was broad enough to cause the people of Sayong to speak Malay in a patois quite different from the one spoken by the people of Kuala Kangsar across the river.

In 1923, Raja Musa succeeded Syed Nordin as Head Prefect and Platoon Sergeant in the Cadet Corps. In the College Football Eleven he played goalkeeper.

After leaving school, like Syed Ahmad, he too joined the Co-operative Department as a Malay Cooperative Officer.

Later, as a nominated member of the Federal Legislative Council, he acquitted himself in a very creditable manner, never missing a chance to intervene effectively in the debates which were then apt to be monopolised by the European and non-Malay unofficial members.

In his capacity as a nominated unofficial member of the Federal Legislative Council, he was indeed a worthy successor to Raja Chulan (later Raja Sir Chulan) whose speeches in the published *Proceedings of the Federal Council* were remarkable for the impeccable English in which they were couched.

Syed Ahmad, who had by then been appointed Dato' Muda Linggi, was also a nominated member at the same time as Raja Musa, but was not as vocal as the latter.

Later still, Raja Musa became an active member of U.M.N.O. It was as an U.M.N.O. delegate from Perak to the annual general meeting of the Party, to be held at the Negri Sembilan Club, that I met him at the Tong Fong Hotel, Seremban. That was in July or August 1947, and it was destined to be the last time I had the opportunity of meeting and talking to this remarkable Perak raja.

Yusof bin Ahmad, the brilliant brother of Za'ba, who had gained the only First Class Certificate in the Government Seventh Standard Examination of December 1918, and who at first aspired to enter the King Edward VII College of Medicine, Singapore, had been cajoled by Dr. Winstedt to join the Educational Service as a Malay Assistant Inspector of Schools.

He was very active in the Scout movement and eventually rose to the rank of Scout Commissioner for Malaya, the first Malay and Asian to hold this post. He won the Silver Wolf and other Scouting Awards.

He succeeded Syed Ahmad as a nominated unofficial member of the Federal Council and, like Raja Musa, participated fully in the Council debates. He was a member of the Educational Committee of the Council and as such, succeeded in persuading the powers that be to build two English schools in the rural areas, one at his birthplace at Batu Kikir, Jempol, (Kuala Pilah), and the other at this father's birthplace, Linggi, in the District of Port Dickson.

He was at the same time a nominated member of the State

Council of Negri Sembilan and as such was chosen a member of the State Executive Council.

Lastly, after his retirement from government service, the first Yang Di Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Abdul Rahman ibni Tuanku Mohamed, chose him as his civilian A.D.C.

Now aged 79, he lives in retirement at Kampung Tengah Linggi. He is, however, not totally retired from useful activity, for year after year since his retirement he has been elected Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan Inggeris, Linggi, (Linggi Secondary School) as well as the Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (National Secondary School) proper. He is also Chairman of the Board of Managers of the Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan Inggeris (English Primary School) and the Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan (National Primary School).

For several years he was the honorary treasurer of the Linggi Mosque Committee and was able to persuade many Old Boys of the Linggi Malay School and philanthropic persons outside Linggi to make donations to the Linggi Mosque Fund. With the money collected he was able to repair and renovate the Linggi Mosque which was originally built by my maternal grandfather, Dato' Muda Haji Mohd. Peral, a little over a hundred years ago.

A couple of years ago, however, he was ousted from his post of honorary treasurer by a faction headed by *Imam* Ambak bin Ishak, a religious fanatic, who ruled that the use of a tape recorder in the mosque to record sermons, *do'a* and readings of the Koran, an innovation introduced by Haji Yusof, was *haram* despite the fact that the State *Mufti* had expressed the opinion that it was quite permissible to do so.

His great friend and rival, Abdullah bin Haji Dahan, stayed on at the College to prepare for the Senior Cambridge Examination of 1920.

In addition to being a monitor, Abdullah was the College librarian and a member of the Football Eleven, in which he played as a right half-back.

The fact that year after year he won the obstacle race in the annual athletic sports was a good indication of the doggedness of his character and his determination to succeed in any field of endeavour to which he was attracted.

In fact, up to my time at the College, he was reputed to be

the most studious boy ever admitted to the College. Indeed, on almost any day after class hours, he could be seen in the College library poring over books or volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

When taking charge of one of the lower classes at the after-dinner "prep" class, a duty assigned to the monitors in rotation, he would sit on the table and direct his gaze at the ceiling in a posture of intense concentration. He would remain in that pose for several minutes at a time.

We thought that he was probably trying to memorise certain passages in one of the plays of Shakespeare, remember the sequence of certain historical events or mentally solve some difficult problem in mathematics, depending upon the textbook he had brought with him to the classroom.

On account of his serious mien and the look of intense concentration on his face, no boy would dare to make the slightest noise, nor behave in any manner that would distract his concentration.

He duly passed the Senior Cambridge with flying colours and, like Syed Ahmad and Raja Musa, joined the Cooperative Department. The reason why these outstanding pupils of the College had opted to join this particular government department was because, motivated by the idealism of youth, they thought that they could do far more good for the rural Malays as cooperative officers than as Malay administrative officers. Furthermore, they were won over by the attractive and persuasive personality of Mr. Cavendish, the Director of Cooperation.

Soon, however, Abdullah had to resign his post as Co-operative Officer on being elected Dato' Sedia Raja, Undang Rembau by the twelve *lembaga* or tribal chiefs of Rembau.

Although an Undang was a Ruling Chief, sovereign in his own *luak*, he was nevertheless appointed an unofficial member of the Federal Legislative Council, where he distinguished himself as a debater and a champion of Malay rights.

He was particularly concerned about the paucity of Malays in the general clerical and railway services, which were almost exclusively staffed by Ceylon Tamils brought over in large numbers by the British colonial government.

It was then the prevailing practice that whenever there was a vacancy in these two, and other government departments, the Ceylon Tamil chief clerks would wangle the vacant posts for

their numerous "cousin brothers" or other countrymen of theirs, although the General Orders specifically stated that preference should be given to Malay candidates in filling up these vacancies. What was even worse was that British heads of department seemed to connive at this malpractice.

As a result of the impassioned advocacy of Dato' Undang Abdullah, the Malays began to be employed in increasing numbers in the clerical, railway and other departments.

During this particular period of his life as a Federal Councillor, a former classmate of his, meeting him at Kuala Lumpur, tactlessly reminded him of his College nickname of Abdullah Sailor.

He laughed and then, suddenly remembering who he was and what he was, he acidly remarked, "I have sailed very far since then". The crestfallen classmate realised too late that it wouldn't do to be too familiar with a Negri Sembilan Undang.

In his spare time Abdullah translated Parr McRay's *Rembau* into Malay for the guidance of the twelve chiefs of their *luak* in the all too frequent *adat* disputes of those days.

He afterwards fell ill and, after a long lingering illness which lasted several years, died at a comparatively early age. By his death, Negri Sembilan lost one of its most illustrious sons and the Malays one of their foremost leaders of the twenties and thirties of the present century.

In the same class as Abdullah bin Haji Dahan was Mohamed Razali. He was a monitor and the goalkeeper of the College Football Eleven. A great reader of novels, he was nearly always to be seen after class hours with his eyes glued to the pages of his favourite novel.

He was very tall for a Malay, his height being almost six feet. Gentle and kindly by nature, he was much liked by his juniors.

After passing the Senior Cambridge Examination, Razali was selected as a Malay Probationer and duly became a member of the Malay Administrative Service and afterwards was promoted to the M.C.S.

He served as District Officer in various districts in Selangor and Perak, as State Financial Officer, Selangor, Commissioner of Land and Mines, Kedah, Deputy State Secretary and finally State Secretary, Perak.

In 1951 and 1952 he acted as Menteri Besar, Perak, on three separate occasions during the absence on leave of the incumbent

Menteri Besar, the Dato' Panglima Bukit Gantang Abdul Wahab. His Civil Service career ended as the pre-*merdeka* Menteri Besar of Perlis.

He was a member of the Perak nobility and finally succeeded to the *Orang Besar Berlapan* dignity of *Orang Kaya-kaya Laksamana Raja Mahkota*.

After his retirement from government service, for a time he held the post of Chairman of the Port Commission of Penang.

Ngah Ghaffar, the head monitor, was another member of the senior class. He was a short, stocky boy or rather young man, who was much respected by the boys, as evidenced by the epithet *Ngah* (uncle) attached to his name.

Besides being the head monitor, he was the Football Captain and the Platoon Sergeant in the Cadet Corps.

To enforce his authority as head monitor he carried a cane and assumed a stern look. But the boys were not deceived by the cane which he was never known to have used, nor by the stern visage which they knew concealed a kind heart.

On the football field, he was amazingly active, and as the centre-half, he was often to be seen roaming all over the field in support of his forwards, or in preventing a breakthrough by the opposing side.

He was but a mediocre scholar who managed to get through the Senior Cambridge Examination by the skin of his teeth. But his sterling character was recognised and he was duly selected as a Malay Probationer and, after leaving school, joined the Malay Administrative Service.

His subsequent career in the government followed the usual pattern of that of an average MAS officer and so far as I have been able to elicit from Perak Old Boys and from the Malayan Civil Service List of 1938 he was not lucky enough to be promoted to the M.C.S.

After Ngah Ghaffar had left school, Syed Nordin bin Syed Hussein was appointed head monitor. Of the other monitors I remember only three: Mohamed Razali bin Mohamed Ali Wasi, Mustafa Albakri bin Haji Hassan and my cousin, Mohamed Salleh bin Haji Sulaiman.

Mustafa Albakri had been a student of Anderson School and had passed the Senior Cambridge Examination there before he was admitted to the M.C.K.K. as a Malay Probationer in June 1921, for, beginning with that year, boys from other schools

who had passed the Senior Cambridge Examination became eligible for selection to the Probationership of the Malay Administrative Service, and the two others who were admitted to the Malay College were Samsudin bin Hitam from King Edward VII School, Taiping, and Osman bin Taat from St. Paul's Institution, Seremban.

In the following year Ahmad bin Hitam from Victoria Institution, Kuala Lumpur, Ahmad bin Mahmud from the High School, Klang, and Bahaman bin Samsudin (ex-minister), from St. Paul's Institution were admitted as Probationers.

Syed Nordin was much respected as all Syeds were in those days, being descendants of the Holy Prophet Mohammed. Apart from his blue blood, however, he was also very much liked by the boys for his brotherly attitude towards the younger boys, as evidenced by the reverential manner in which they addressed him as "Tok Syed".

The epithet "Tok" as used in this way does not mean "grandfather" but a person revered by his contemporaries even though they may be of the same age or even older then he.

He was very religious and never missed his five daily prayers at which he acted as *imam* and Yazid as *bilal*.

He was very kind to Megat Khas, Yazid and me and one day he invited us to his house at Enggor and introduced us to his bearded, half-Arab father, a stout, reverend old man of about sixty-five.

We went for a swim in one of the tributaries of the Perak River about a mile from its junction with the river and, returning to his house after the swim, we found a curry tiffin already laid out for us. With our appetites whetted by the swimming we ate our lunch with excellent appetite and soon disposed of an assortment of chicken curry, a *gulai* of river fish seasoned with *tempoyak*, fried chicken, and *petai* eaten with *sambal belacan*. For dessert we had *santan durian* and tasted some of the most delicious *durian tembaga* we had ever had. After a couple of hours of post-prandial nap and having had tea with *lempok*-cum-coconut gratings, the four of us trudged back to Kuala Kangsar, having enjoyed the hospitality of Tok Syed and his parents.

Besides being the head monitor and the College *imam*, Syed Nordin was also the champion athlete, the Platoon Sergeant in the Cadet Corps and the Football Captain.

He was a good scholar and had no difficulty in passing the

Senior Cambridge Examination. He was selected as a Probationer and duly became an officer in the Malay Administrative Service.

When he was attached to the Land Office, Kuala Lumpur, in 1927, I, as a medical student on vacation, once visited him with Yazid at his government quarters.

Unlike some of his colleagues, who were prone to live beyond their means and thus either became indebted to money-lenders or accepted bribes from rich towkays for favours rendered, Syed Nordin's life-style was that of an officer who cut his coat according to his cloth and never attempted to ape the ways of European civil servants.

He remained the same old Tok Syed of College days, who prayed five times a day, fasted every day during *Ramadan* and never touched, let alone drank a drop of liquor.

That night he joined Yazid and me sleeping on mattresses spread on the floor of his sitting room, and the following morning we were served a simple breakfast of coffee with *goreng pisang* and *kueh apam*.

He was duly promoted to the Malayan Civil Service and served as an A.D.O. and D.O. in Selangor, Pahang and Perak.

To take a leap over the arch of the years, I was not surprised to hear that after Merdeka he became a member of PAS and unsuccessfully contested as its candidate in one of the Perak parliamentary constituencies in the general election of 1959.

During my second term as Menteri Besar of Negri Sembilan he called on me at Seremban, but unfortunately I was away from the State Capital inspecting a land scheme in the District of Jelebu.

I was therefore very glad to have the opportunity of meeting him for the first time after many years, at the Diamond Jubilee of the Malay College in 1965.

At sixty-five, he appeared to be untouched by age, while at fifty-seven, my hair was rapidly greying and balding.

He attributed his excellent state of health to the peace of mind engendered by his scrupulous observance of the five daily prayers and the annual daily fast during the month of Ramadan, and last but by no means least, to his resignation to the Will of God under all circumstances which, he said, was a cardinal virtue enjoined by Islam.

The next morning he entertained Raja Ayoub and me to mid-

morning coffee and cakes followed by a curry tiffin. For dessert we had *santan durian* which I knew from College days was Tok Syed's favourite dessert delicacy.

The last occasion when I had the opportunity of meeting him was on 3 August 1972. On that occasion during a visit to Ipoh, Captain Salleh and I made a special trip to Kuala Kangsar to call on him.

On arriving at his house near the railway station, we found Tok Syed on the point of driving his granddaughter, a fair maid of eighteen, to Ipoh for an interview at the State Secretariat, as she had applied for a job at the Tourist Office there.

He postponed his trip to Ipoh and over coffee, *puttu piring* and fried bread-and-egg, we talked of "mice and men, cabbages and kings".

He made no bones about telling us that he had a second wife in Ipoh and a third one at Karai. He said that Islam recognises the biological fact that man is polygamous by instinct, but instead of permitting him to keep a regular harem, Islam restricts the practice of polygamy to four wives on the very strict condition that the husband should treat his four wives with equal justice and fairness.

He even laughingly told us that because he was already sixty when he married his young Karai wife, the enraged youths of that *kampung* had slashed the four tyres of his car with a *parang*.

I then asked him frankly how he set about marrying his very young wives, not with any intention of adopting his methods, but out of sheer curiosity. Without batting an eyelid, he said his usual technique was to offer the parents of his prospective bride three acres of rubber smallholding.

I next asked him what would happen in case the parents declined his offer. "Then", said he, "I would increase the bride-price to five acres of bud-grafted, tappable rubber land". Captain Salleh chimed in, "What happened if the five acres, too, were rejected by the parents?"

Tok Syed laughed and answered that five acres was the utmost limit he was prepared to offer the parents of a young girl, however beautiful and sexy she was. In case five acres was not acceptable to the parents, there were not wanting impecunious parents in other *kampung* who would accept such a generous offer.

Captain Salleh and I roared with laughter on hearing Tok Syed's very frank and artless account of his marital affairs, especially when he told us about the slashing of the tyres of his car by the enraged young men of Karai.

Incidently, polygamy is quite common in Perak and Pahang among members of the upper crust of Malay society, whereas in matriarchal Negri Sembilan it is rare. This is no doubt due to the matriarchal *Adat Perpateh* which states that after marriage a man is literally at the beck and call of his wife's maternal relatives in accordance with the customary saying:

Orang semenda di tempat semenda,
Yang cerdek dibawa berunding,
Yang bodoh disuruh diarah,
Yang buta mengembus lesong,
Yang pekak mencucoh meriam,
Yang tempang mengalau ayam,
Yang kaya tempat bertedoh.

More seriously, Tok Syed asked me about the proposed formation of the Malaysian Government Pensioners Association and about the prospect of our pensions being revised and of the restoration of a full pension to pensioners who had been receiving their reduced pensions for more than twelve and a half years.

He said that, as he had retired from government service in 1952, he would be entitled to seven and a half years of accumulated quarter pension which would amount to quite a substantial sum.

With the money he proposed to go on pilgrimage to Mecca for the second time. He invited me to go to Mecca with him and said that his Arab grandfather had left a number of houses in Mecca and we could stay in comfort in one of them rather than in one of the generally overcrowded houses provided by the pilgrimage sheikhs.

The most outstanding scholar of that year was undoubtedly Mustafa Albakri. A handsome upstanding boy, he shone at his work and at games, in English as well as in Chemistry.

In addition to the usual team games, he was quite a considerable boxer, although in a boxing contest held in the College Hall, he was out-pointed by Samsudin bin Hitam.

As sub-editor of the College magazine he contributed a series

of articles entitled "World Workers", which were really profiles of notable Collegians of his time.

Knowing that I was greatly interested in English poetry as a result of Mr. Jermyn's superb teaching of the subject, he persuaded me to contribute some poems to the magazine. I reluctantly agreed to do so and laboriously wrote a couple of poems, entitled "Farewell to the Alma Mater" and "The Ronggeng", trying my best to put into practice Mr. Jermyn's teaching of English prosody and poetic diction.

I was surprised when they were rejected, for I had tried so hard and thought I had succeeded in getting both the metre and the rhyme correct. Looking back I now realise that the first poem was too gushingly sentimental and the tone of the second one altogether too frivolous.

To mollify me he accepted an article of mine, "*Ponggok Merindu Bulan*", which was an attempt to tell in English the story of the love of the Night Owl for the Moon, as told in the well-known Malay narrative poem *Syair Burung Ponggok*. He also accepted another article of mine which told in English one of the many folk tales of *Sang Kancil*, the cunning mousedeer.

Besides these two contributions of mine to the College magazine before I left school and after Mustafa Albakri had done so, I imitated him by writing a profile of Megat Yunus, the new, very aristocratic and very strict head prefect, thus continuing the "World Workers" series started by Mustafa Albakri.

After leaving school, he went on to carve for himself a distinguished career in the Malay Administrative Service and, afterwards, in the M.C.S.. His career culminated in his being appointed "Member for Industrial and Social Relations" when the colonial government introduced the Member System of government, before the Alliance Party won sweeping victories in the election to the partially-elected Federal Legislative Council as well as to all the State Councils in 1955.

In 1954 he was promoted to Staff A position in the M.C.S., the highest rank then attained by a Malay M.C.S. officer.

After the Alliance had come to partial power in 1955, he was appointed Keeper of the Rulers' Seals, and later Grand Chamberlain, in which capacity he officiated at the installation of the first Yang Di Pertuan Agong.

After his retirement from government service in 1957 he was appointed Chairman to the Election Commission.

He was later elected a member of the Council of the University of Malaya and functioned as the Council Chairman for a number of years.

His two other classmates who were good, if not quite outstanding scholars, were my cousin Mohamed Salleh bin Haji Sulaiman (now Dato' Panglima Lumut of Selangor) and Kamarudin bin Idris (now Dato').

In the Senior Cambridge Examination of his year, Salleh obtained distinctions in Malay and Geography. For the latter distinction he won the Cikgu Ahmad Jalaludin Silver Geography Medal.

A favourite of Mr. Jermyn, he was at first appointed by him Resident Monitor at the Prep. School to help Miss Leith and Miss Griffith enforce discipline. When, however, Mr. Stowell was allotted the government quarters next to the Prep. School and was entrusted with the task of looking after the welfare of the Prep. School boys and maintaining discipline among them, Salleh returned to *Sekolah Besar* as an ordinary monitor and later as a prefect, as Mr. Bazell preferred to call the appointment.

In addition, he was a member of the Football Eleven, playing as one of the two inside-forwards; as well as a bugler and later Drum Sergeant in the Cadet Corps.

After leaving school, Salleh was duly appointed a Malay Officer in the Malay Administrative Service and spent the first eight years of this service doing Land and District Office work at Seremban, Jelebu and Port Dickson.

His record of service as shown in the Malayan Civil Service List of 1938 indicates he was the youngest and earliest among the Malay Probationers of his year to be promoted to the Malayan Civil Service and that as an M.C.S officer he served as Acting Second Assistant District Officer, Tapah, and Assistant District Officer, Larut.

But the most significant item in his record of service was his appointment as Acting District Officer, Kuala Lumpur and Ulu Langat in 1936.

There can be no doubt that by then he had won the confidence of Mr. (later Sir) T.S. Adams, the then British Resident, Selangor, and that it was Mr. Adams who appointed him to this dual post. No doubt Captain Salleh's work as a district commissioner in the Scout Movement and as a lieutenant in the M.V.I.

had predisposed Mr. Adams to regard him as an outstanding Malay civil servant.

It was also Mr. Adams who, as president of the Kuala Lumpur Flying Club, persuaded him to be a member of this Club and to be trained as a pilot by Mr. Newark, the Flying Club instructor. He duly gained his licence as a pilot, thus becoming the first Malay to be able to fly an aeroplane.

He was promoted to captain in the F.M.S.V.F. (Federated Malay States Volunteer Force), the new name by which the former M.V.I. (Malayan Volunteer Infantry) was designated.

He was on active service at the outbreak of the Second World War in Malaya and, with the Company of Malay Volunteers under his command, was involved in the headlong retreat of the British, Australian and Indian Forces down the Peninsula before the relentless onslaught of the Japanese army under General Yamashita.

He somehow eluded capture by the Japanese *Kempetai* and made his way back to Seremban. He thus escaped from being slaughtered by the Japanese as were his second cousin, Captain Yazid, along with Captain Raja Aman Shah, Captain Abass of Malacca and several officers of the Malay Regiment.

During the Japanese Occupation, he served as District Officer in the district of Grik, Perak, a post he had once held in pre-war days.

After the war he was posted to the Social Welfare Department at Kuala Lumpur, and on my return to Malaya after attending post-graduate courses in London and Dublin and being posted to the General Hospital, Seremban at the end of 1949, I found he had been appointed State Secretary, Negri Sembilan under Dato' (later Tun) Abdul Malek.

Dato' Malek was undoubtedly one of the ablest, most hard-working and honest of the Malay M.C.S. officers. His peers were Dato' Hamzah, Raja Uda and Raja Musa of Selangor, Dato' Mahmud, Dato' Hussein and Dato' Samah of Pahang, Raja Kamaruzzaman and Raja Salim of Perak.

He was, in addition, noted for his old-world courtesy to one and all, his piety, and a heart which was overflowing with "the milk of human kindness".

It was undoubtedly Captain Salleh's unblemished record of service and the fact that he was the most senior Negri Sembilan M.C.S. officer that induced Dato' Malek to insist on his being

appointed State Secretary of Negri-Sembilan.

As Menteri Besar, Dato' Malek was chairman of the State War Committee responsible for coordinating measures designed to counter communist activities in the state.

On my arrival in Negri Sembilan at the end of 1949, the communist insurgents were at the height of their murderous activities in the state. They had ambushed a truck-load of S.C.s (special constables) at the pass on the Seremban-Jelebu road, sprayed the truck with kerosene oil and set it on fire.

Some twenty special constables were thus burned to death. Their charred bodies were afterwards brought to the General Hospital mortuary. As I was on duty that day I was horrified at the sight of these young men, all of whom were in their early twenties. Fortunately a complete post-mortem examination of these bodies was not insisted on by the police as the cause of death was obvious even to a layman.

A couple of days later, the dead body of the father-in-law of Mr. Lim Yew Law, the proprietor of the Plaza Theatre, was discovered in the *belukar* at Paroi on the north-eastern outskirts of Seremban town with his hands tied behind his back and a bullet hole in his forehead. With a couple of friends, who were lucky enough to escape death at the hands of the communists, he had gone on a wild-boar-hunting excursion to Paroi.

It was at that juncture in the fight against the *Bintang Tiga* (Three Stars) rebels that Dato' Malek fell very seriously ill and had to undergo an abdominal operation at the General Hospital, Seremban.

His post-operative condition was so serious that his life was despaired of and it was undoubtedly the skill of Mr. Allen, the Kuala Lumpur surgeon called for consultation by Dr. Marten Read, who had performed the operation, that saved his life.

However, he had been so greatly weakened by the operation and its aftermath that Mr. Allen and Dr. Read recommended four months' medical leave to enable him to recuperate thoroughly and to regain his strength.

Every one in Seremban at that time expected that Captain Salleh would be made to act as Menteri Besar, Negri Sembilan. He had acted as Menteri Besar for four months once before when Dato' Malek went on the pilgrimage to Mecca and there was no valid reason why he should not do so again, especially as

Lokman bin Yusof, the first Assistant State Secretary, could be made to act as State Secretary in his place.

Lokman bin Yusof happened to be the son of Aminah, a first cousin of Captain Salleh's, and many people thought that with Lokman working in tandem and in perfect rapport with Captain Salleh, the state administration could not possibly be jeopardised, nor the emergency situation be mishandled.

However, this expectation was never realised. Captain Salleh was unceremoniously bundled off to Morib to fill the newly-created post of Rehabilitation Officer and Incik (later Tun) Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Majid, the State Secretary of Selangor was appointed Acting Menteri Besar, Negri Sembilan, and Lokman elevated to the post of State Secretary.

Lokman being his *anak saudara sepupu*, Capt. Salleh felt that his promotion to the substantive post of State Secretary in his place was "the unkindest cut of all".

Several Malay M.C.S. colleagues of Captain Salleh sympathised with him and deplored the unseemly haste with which he was sent packing to Morib and many members of the general public of all nationalities who knew of the close family relationship between him and Lokman blamed the latter for having "usurped" Captain Salleh's post, for there could be no doubt that he was a most popular State Secretary.

Needless to say, members of the extended family, of which I was one, joined in the muted chorus of blame against Lokman. I even went so far as to accuse him of meanness and treachery in accepting the post and telling him that he should have politely declined to accept it on the grounds that Captain Salleh was his *bapak saudara sepupu*. All that he could say in answer to my accusation was that he had to obey the orders of the powers-that-be.

Knowing Dato' Malek as I did, I felt quite certain that had he not fallen so seriously ill, been operated on and afterwards given four months' medical leave, his religion, his conscience and his innate kindness would never have made him agree to the demotion of Captain Salleh, for to cause a feeling of animosity between two close relatives was about the last thing that Dato' Malek would ever do.

Be that as it may, retributive justice was soon to overtake Lokman, for not many months later, he in his turn was demoted and transferred to Perak and later to Pahang as Commissioner of Land and Mines. He was succeeded as State Secretary, Negri

Sembilan by Incik (later Dato') Samsudin bin Nain, barrister-at-law and an even more efficient S.S. than Lokman. When Dato' Malek finally retired from government service, Dato' Samsudin succeeded him as Menteri Besar and Incik (later Tan Sri) Sharif bin Abdul Samad was appointed State Secretary.

Captain Salleh did not remain long as Rehabilitation Officer at Morib and a few months after his appointment to that lowly post some sort of amends was made by appointing him as First Magistrate, Ipoh.

After about a year at Ipoh he was at last promoted to the post of Deputy Chief Social Welfare Officer under Dr. Rowson and later under Mr. J.A. Harvey. At the age of fifty-three he retired from government service.

However, six months after his retirement, at the insistence of Sir James Thomson, the then Chief Justice, he agreed to be reemployed as Magistrate, Klang. He served in this post for a further period of twelve years and when at last he gave it up, he was given a gratuity and a second pension by the Selangor state government.

His first wife having died some time in 1963, he remarried a Klang widow, Wan Intan, the lady supervisor of Asrama Putri, a hostel for Malay girl pupils of schools in Klang.

For his long service he was made a J.P. on the occasion of the Sultan of Selangor's birthday and in 1978 at the age of seventy-five the title of Dato' Panglima Lumut was conferred upon him by the Sultan. The British colonial government had awarded him the M.B.E. in pre-*merdeka* days and on the same day as I was honoured with the order of Panglima Mangku Negara (P.M.N.) by his Majesty, the fourth Yang di Pertuan Agong, Captain Salleh received the order of Jasa Setia Mahkota (J.S.M.) from the King.

I believe that Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Bapa Merdeka* and the first Prime Minister of Malaya and later of Malaysia, was fully aware of the fact that Captain Salleh had rendered valuable services to the country both before and after Merdeka and that he had been shabbily treated in Negri Sembilan during Dato' Malek's absence on medical leave. Like Dato' Malek, the Tunku, too, has a heart overflowing with "the milk of human kindness" and he readily approved the conferment of the J.S.M. on Captain Salleh.

Captain Salleh was yet to experience another heart-rending

loss when his only son, Hamzah, State Legal Adviser, Johore, died of cancer of the colon in early 1972 at the early age of forty.

Kamarudin bin Idris (now Dato' Kamarudin) had been a student of Victoria Institution, Kuala Lumpur, before joining the Malay College. He was a notable scholar and was especially good in mathematics. His handwriting was remarkable for the clear, rounded form of the letters of the alphabet and was commended by Mr. Bazell. He was a member of the Board of Prefects; but, as far I can recollect, was not good at games.

After passing the Senior Cambridge Examination, he was selected as a Malay Probationer. He, too, gained rapid promotion to the Malayan Civil Service and ended his distinguished civil service career as the pre-*merdeka* Menteri Besar, Trengganu.

After Merdeka, he was appointed Malayan ambassador to Indonesia and after completing his term there, was posted to Saudi Arabia as ambassador, from which post he finally retired.

Ibrahim bin Abdul Karim, with the appellation Ah Chong attached to his name because of his resemblance to a Chinese, was another good scholar of those days.

He was a voracious reader and a good friend of mine. Later he developed a fondness for reading books on famous murder trials at the Old Bailey, the London Central Criminal Court. In these trials such brilliant lawyers as Edward Marshall Hall crossed swords with one another.

He was a winner of Cikgu Ahmad Jalaludin's silver medal for geography in the Senior Cambridge Examination of his year.

He, too, did not play any team games, but in later days when I was first posted to Pekan as the Assistant Medical Officer-in-charge of the District Hospital there and he was the Assistant District Officer at Kuantan, I was surprised to find that he could play tennis quite well and took part in tennis tournaments both at Kuantan and at Pekan.

He stagnated for quite a while in the M.A.S. before being promoted to the M.C.S., the reason for his late promotion being most probably his inability to *kowtow* to British D.O.s and his proclivity to call a spade a spade when speaking to them.

He was compensated for his late promotion by being appointed as one of the *Orang Besar Delapan* (Eight Great Chiefs) of Perak as *Orang Kaya-kaya Shahbandar Paduka Indra.*

Ahmad bin Hitam was a distinguished student of Victoria

Institution who, on being selected a Malay Probationer, was admitted to the Malay College in 1924. Six feet tall, he towered over the rest of the boys. Suave in manner and well dressed, his wavy hair centrally parted and dressed with Anzora Cream, he presented a striking appearance. He was appointed a prefect and was a member of the Football Eleven.

His father being a Linggi man who had married in Klang, he was especially friendly with Yazid and me and would sometimes give us a treat at the town restaurant, famed for its beef steaks and chicken-chops.

He had an excellent command of English, as evidenced by an article, entitled "Little Strokes fell Great Oaks", which he contributed to the College magazine.

It is sad to recall that half-way through his course in the Special or Malay Probationship Class, he developed symptoms of pulmonary tuberculosis and had to leave school.

The tuberculous infection was apparently of the extremely virulent type and, in about a year's time, we heard the news of his untimely death. Thus was the life of a very promising youth cut short by the Captain of the House of Death.

Of the boys who were in the same class with me, my friend Megat Khas was undoubtedly the most outstanding.

His career as a doctor was absolutely brilliant, as he was actually the first Malay doctor to pass the extremely stiff examination of the Royal College of Physicians, London, the M.R.C.P. diploma which entitles its holder in the government Medical Service in Malaysia and other Commonwealth countries to be appointed to the specialist post of physician.

This examination is so gruelling that its pass rate has never been more than ten percent at the most, and even lecturers from British universities, who already held the M.D. degrees of their own universities, and one American associate professor of medicine were "ploughed" in the M.R.C.P. examination of 1949.

Megat Khas not only got through this examination, but also collected a string of minor diplomas. They were the D.C.H., the L.M. (Rotunda), D. Obst. R.C.O.G., and the D.T.M. & H.

The only other Malay doctor of that time who performed a comparable feat was Dr. Salleh bin Abdul Hamid of Johore However, the specialist diploma that Dr. Salleh received was the F.R.F.P.S. i.e. the Fellowship of the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, which was not nearly so dif-

ficult to get as the London M.R.C.P.

Dr. Salleh studied for three years in the U.K. compared to Megat Khas's two years, his mixed bag of diplomas containing in addition the D.P.H., D.T.M. & H., D.R.C.O.G. and the M.M. (SA).

Incidentally, Megat Khas was to my knowledge the only doctor in Malaya who claimed to have read the twenty-volume *British Encyclopaedia of Medicine* from cover to cover, and knowing him intimately as I do, I believe him.

As several other graduates of the former King Edward VII College of Medicine had also succeeded in getting specialist qualifications in the United Kingdom, it is clear that the training provided by the precursor of the present Medical Faculty of the University of Singapore was every bit as sound as that of its successor.

Indeed, Professor Ransome used to say that the graduates of the former King Edward VII College of medicine were "hand-picked", in contrast to the earlier medical graduates of the University of Singapore whom he characterised as of the "conveyor-belt" type.

About six months before the Senior Cambridge Examination of 1924, Mr. Bazell tested us by means of a peculiar kind of test which I now know to be an intelligence test. After the test, he confidentially told Megat Khas, Yazid and me that we had scored approximately equal marks. Apparently Mr. Bazell did not wish to puzzle us by using the expression "Intelligent Quotient" or I.Q. He said that we were definitely of above average intelligence and that we could be classed as "university material".

However, he sounded a note of warning to the effect that what we should be able to make of our innate intelligence depended a great deal upon our own ambitions in life, our diligence and our determination to achieve our aims in life.

It is in the latter two conditions that my second cousin Yazid may be said to have fallen short of the ideal. For though he toyed with the idea of getting admitted to the Medical College with Megat Khas and me, for some reason or other he neglected his work so that he failed to qualify for admission to the College by getting the required number of credit ratings in the Senior Cambridge Examination. He therefore decided to work under Za'ba at the Translation Bureau, Sultan Idris Training College,

Tanjong Malim.

Other notable scholars in the same class with me were Shahmarudin, the future Undang of Jelebu and Tengku Ya'acob bin Tengku Chik of Kelantan. As there was no age limit in those days for entry to the Malay College, Shahmarudin was admitted to the College at the age of fourteen or fifteen. However, after getting three double promotions, he reached the Senior Cambridge class in three years.

Rather mediocre in English, he was absolutely brilliant in mathematics. So was Tengku Ya'acob of Kelantan and it was on these two friends of mine that I leaned whenever I was "stumped" over some especially difficult problems in geometry, trigonometry or algebra.

Shahmarudin was the son of the *Kadi of* Jelebu so that he was well-grounded in religious knowledge and performed the five daily prayers regularly. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that he had brought with him some *kitab* (Malay translation of Arabic religious treatises). Included among them was a *buku tib* (Malay translation of an ancient Arabic pharmacopoeia).

Too fat and clumsy to play any games, he was often to be seen in the dining room when other boys were either playing football, hockey or cricket, or being drilled by Bir Singh. He would close all the doors and windows of the dining-hall and proceed to catch as many sparrows as had not flown out of the hall.

Having caught a sufficient number, say, four or five sparrows, he would ritually cut their necks in the required Islamic way. He would then take the birds to the kitchen and asked the cook to fry them for him. At dinner that night Shahmarudin was seen by those seated near him to eat his fried sparrows with great relish.

When they asked him why he had a partiality for fried sparrows, he said that according to his *buku tib,* the eating of sparrow flesh would make any person *terang hati* (intelligent). None of the boys laughed at him for having such an implicit faith in the efficacy of the recipes contained in his *buku tib,* for it must be remembered that in those days almost every Malay tended to believe in the contents of any book translated from Arabic.

Besides his unquestioning reliance upon the *buku tib,* Shahmarudin believed in anything recommended by a *kampung bomoh* or *pawang*. For when he once showed me the inside of his *song-*

kok, I found it stuck full of the wing feathers of the *sikap* bird, a species of hawk no bigger then a *bebarau* (bulbul), but as vicious as the bigger hawks in pouncing upon and eating newly-hatched chicks.

When I asked him the reason why he had adorned the inner lining of his *songkok* with these feathers, he said that they had such potent magical properties that would ensure his victory in a fight with any boy, who might be jealous of his success in examinations, or who might threaten to give him a thrashing.

Shahmarudin duly passed the Senior Cambridge Examination, joined the General Clerical Service and was posted to the District Office at Port Dickson. But before long he was elected as the Undang of Jelebu with the grandiloquent title of Dato' Mendika Menteri Akhir-il-zaman.

Tengku Ya'acob joined the Police Force as an A.C.P. and was posted to Kota Bahru, the capital of his home state of Kelantan.

The youngest in the class and a very promising boy was Nordin Ali, who in the earlier stages of his school career was addicted to reading Buffalo Bill stories of the Wild West and who later showed a marked fondness for the novels of G.A. Henty, many volumes of which were available in the College library.

Midway through the Senior Cambridge course however, he fell ill and had to leave school. When he died the College lost one of its best students.

Another clever boy was Sulaiman bin Derus. Besides being good at his work, he was also an accomplished *Koran* reader as well as a great tease. He and Nordin Ali were so small compared with the rest of the boys in the Senior Cambridge Class that Mr. Bazell invariably addressed both of them in class as "Babe".

After passing the Cambridge Examination, Sulaiman was selected as a Malay Probationer and duly became an M.A.S. officer. For some reason unknown to me he was never promoted to the M.C.S.

I have forgotten to mention that in the Senior Cambridge Class of 1923, i.e. the year before mine, there was another bright Negri Sembilan boy, Jaal bin Jaman of Sri Menanti.

Like Shahmarudin he shone in mathematics and as a member of the Football Eleven the played an aggressive type of game and was a sort of terror on the football field.

He passed the Senior Cambridge Examination with flying colours and was duly selected as a Malay Probationer and afterwards became an M.A.S. officer. Like Sulaiman bin Derus, however, he never made it to the M.C.S.

In the Junior Cambridge class the two boys who were rivals in scholastic achievement were Nik Ahmad Kamil (later Tan Sri) and Abdul Kuddus bin Mohamed Fathullah (later Dato').

The latter had lost about six months of schooling due to illness caused by a stone in his bladder. This had plagued him since he was a pupil of the Linggi Malay School, until in 1922 he was operated on by Mr. Graham, the surgeon at the Kuala Lumpur General Hospital and a calculus about the size of a pigeon's egg was removed from his bladder.

After Kuddus had recovered from the after-effects of the operation he never looked back and vied with Nik Ahmad Kamil for first place in the Cambridge classes. I remember that, for being the first boy in the Junior Cambridge Examination, he was given Chapman's English translation of Homer's *Odyssey* as the Form prize. I later borrowed this book from him and read it with great pleasure.

They both passed the Senior Cambridge Examination with flying colours, but I don't remember who came out top in this examination.

After leaving school, Nik Kamil was sent by the Kelantan state government to England to study law at Lincoln's Inn and Abdul Kuddus decided to work as a translator under Za'ba at Tanjong Malim.

Either in Class III or Class IIB, the two brightest boys were Ahmad bin Haji Hussein of Pahang and Raja Ayoub bin Raja Bot, the brother of Raja Musa, barrister-at-law, who was later appointed the first Malay judge.

After passing the Senior Cambridge Examination both were selected as Malay Probationers and eventually were appointed Malay officers in the M.A.S. Both were very keen to read law at one of the Inns of Court, London, and applied for government scholarships.

Their applications were, however, turned down. I was told later that the only British Resident who supported their applications was Mr. J.V. Cowgill, who had minuted that it was unwise to deny aspiring Malay officers the opportunity to read law. No doubt the objections of the other British Residents were

motivated by the fear that Malay lawyers might turn to politics and clamour for all sorts of reform in the administration of the country and eventually for independence. In fact this was to happen after the Second World War, when two lawyers, Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Abdul Razak led U.M.N.O. and its Alliance partners, the M.C.A. and M.I.C., in demanding Merdeka from the British colonialists.

Years later when I was the doctor-in-charge of the District Hospital, Pekan I was to meet Mr. Cowgill, as the British Resident of Pahang, during his visits to Pekan. I found that he was quite the kindest and the most affable of the British Residents that I had come in contact with during my twenty-three years as a government doctor.

He even invited me to partner him in a doubles game of tennis at the Pekan Residency, in which our opponents were J.D. Hodgekinson, the District Officer, Pekan, and R.B. Black, his Secretary.

That was an unforgettable event in the life of a young doctor, by then already inured to being looked down upon by three of his predecessors, two state Medical and Health Officers (S.M.H.O.s), two British Medical Officers and a number of other types of British officers who were not even university graduates.

Both Ahmad bin Haji Hussein and Raja Ayoub bin Raja Bot gained rapid promotion to the M.C.S. After Merdeka the former rose to one of the topmost rungs of the Civil Service ladder when he was appointed Head of the Malayan Establishment.

After his retirement from the Civil Service he was re-employed as Keeper of the Rulers' Seals, the duties of which post he has performed so efficiently that after more than fifteen years he has so far not been replaced.

Raja Ayoub, however, chose to retire from the Civil Service at the time when the Public Services were in the process of being Malayanised. After his retirement he obtained a secretarial post in MIDA.

In the lowest class, two brilliant boys were studying who were destined to reach the Junior Cambridge class three years after their admission to the College.

They were Mohamed Taufik bin Ahmad, Yazid's younger brother, and Zulkifli bin Mohamed Tahrim. Taufik was so bril-

liant that at the age of thirteen he was already reading Darwin's *Origin of Species*.

It is sad to recall that, returning to the College after one of the school vacations, he fell very seriously ill, having caught a very severe infection of some kind, which caused his premature death after a short illness of only three days. The infection remained undiagnosed to the last and Taufik's illness and death reminded me of my brother Kassim's equally mysterious illness and death.

In any case, the death of Taufik, which brought so much grief and despair to his parents and close relatives, made his father decide to have his youngest son, Abdullah, educated at the King George V School, Seremban, rather than at the Malay College.

Abdullah eventually qualified as a doctor at the King Edward VII College of Medicine, thereby becoming the third Linggi and Negri Sembilan man to be a member of the medical profession.

He joined the government Medical Service and after Merdeka rose successively to the super-scale posts of Medical Superintendent, General Hospital, Seremban; State Medical Health Officer, Kelantan, then in Johore and last of all, Selangor. After holding the last post for a couple of years he finally retired from government service.

After a brilliant school career, Zulkifli bin Mohamed Tahrim became a Malay officer in the M.A.S. and gained rapid promotion to the M.C.S. If I remember rightly, during the Japanese Occupation, while travelling from Ipoh to Kuala Kangsar, where he had been posted as District Officer, a communist bullet tragically ended his life and brilliant career.

It remains for me to describe a number of my contemporaries at the College who, while not remarkable for their school work, displayed marked talents in other fields not related to book learning, or were noted for their peculiar traits of character, eccentric behaviour, funny remarks or sayings.

One of the most remarkable of these boys was Abdullah Bokhari of Kelantan. He was the College violinist who responded so eagerly to Mr. Bartholomeo's teaching and practised his scales and other musical exercises so assiduously that by the time he left school he was already quite a good violinist. It was a pity that he was not given a scholarship to enable him to go overseas to further his musical education under a

renowned violinist.

Abdullah Bakti, also of Kelantan, had a phenomenal memory and had learned many of the long *surah* of the Koran by heart so that at our weekly Koran-reading class, he assisted Tuan Haji Khalid in teaching the boys in reading the Koran. After leaving school, he joined the Kelantan Civil Service and served as District Officer in various districts of Kelantan.

The third notable Kelantan boy was Tengku Ismail. He had an excellent command of Malay, as evidenced by his regular contributions to *Semaian*, a College literary magazine, under the pen-name "Ular Lidi".

The *nom-de-plume* suited him to a T, for he was as thin as a rail. Despite his thinness, he appeared to have a voracious appetite, for at meal times, it was noticeable that the heaped platefuls of rice he regularly tucked in exceeded in quantity that of any other boy.

He was apparently an example of a man so physiologically constituted that he is able to consume and metabolise large quantities of carbohydrates and other fattening forms of food without being able to gain any weight.

Then there was Abdullah, the son of Dato' Gempa, one of the twelve *lembaga* or tribal chiefs of Rembau. He was a stocky boy, about two years older than the rest of the boys in his class. He was very studious and it seemed to be his idea that the best way of mastering a subject was to try and learn everything by heart.

While the rest of the boys in his class eagerly left the classroom at the mid-morning break to drink the *air-batu kacang* with Marie biscuits sold by Karim in the dining-hall or eat Nestle's nutmilk chocolate and sweets bought at the College tuck-shop, he generally stayed back in class, his lips moving all the time in an apparent attempt to memorise whatever he was reading at the time.

One day, he was asked by the class master the meaning of the word "hydrophobia". Without any hesitation he proudly stood up and answered, "Hydrophobia is a disease bitten by mad dogs". He was astonished when his answer was greeted by peals of laughter from the rest of the boys.

He failed in the annual examination of Class IIB, the equivalent of the former Standard Seven, and was disgusted with his poor performance in the examination despite the hard work he had put in.

He therefore decided to leave school and to apply for the post of a dresser at the General Hospital, Seremban. He was successful in his application and began his training as a probationer dresser.

It turned out that the practical work of a dresser interested him very much and he managed to pass the various departmental examinations at the first attempt. Before his retirement he was promoted to the highest superscale post in this branch of the government service.

As a senior dresser he was posted to the District Hospital, Port Dickson, and in that capacity was entrusted by Dr. Panikar, the Assistant Medical Officer-in-charge of the hospital, with the task of paying weekly visits in the travelling ambulance to every *kampung* in the district of Port Dickson.

I remember one such visit he paid to Linggi. He wore a full suit complete with necktie and solar topee. He carried a stethoscope, for in those days a very senior dresser was trained to auscultate a patient. Abdullah bin Dato' Gempa acted his part so confidently and with such assurance that everyone in Linggi thought he was a doctor.

Another Rembau boy named Hashim, had difficulty in pronouncing words beginning with the two letters "th". So Sulaiman bin Derus used to tease him by saying, "sree hundred and sirty-sree".

He was quite a good scholar and passed the Junior Cambridge Examination without any difficulty and could have passed the Senior Cambridge Examination had he chosen to stay on at the College.

However, he decided to leave school and joined the Railway Department and served as station-master at various places, finally attaining before his retirement the post of station-master, Gemas, one of the most senior station-masterships in the Railway Department.

Another comical Rembau boy was Yahaya with the appellation *Loyek* attached to his name. During the hottest hours of the day at weekends, he used to take off his *baju*, sling it across his shoulder and testily complain in the broadest Rembau dialect, *"Panehnyo badan den bagi digobust"* (*Panasnya badan saya bagi direbus;* I'm being boiled alive).

He was a tall gangling boy with splayed feet who, like Hashim, was quite a good scholar and like him, left school after

passing the Junior Cambridge Examination. He joined the Police Force as an Inspector and served in various districts in Negri Sembilan and Selangor.

One of the Perak boys of my time, Syed Bakar by name, was a born mimic, who delighted in speaking Malay as the Javanese usually do. He would act a *bangsawan* play *a la* Javanese, enacting the different male and female roles in turn as though they were played by Javanese actors and actresses. These impromptu solo performances were so comical that they generally attracted a large crowd of boys who applauded his mimicry and laughed heartily until the whole dormitory resounded with their merriment.

After leaving school, he joined the Police Department as an inspector. Some years later I visited him with Yazid at Seremban, where he had just been transferred from Tampin. He lived in the now derelict government quarters next door to the present office of the Waterworks Department.

At lunch time, he gave us a treat at the Kwong Woh Restaurant, Birch Road, much frequented by Malays because its cooks specialised in preparing Malay dishes. During the course of the lunch, he was as irrepressibly comical as ever, for he spoke to us in the typical Negri Sembilan dialect.

Two Selangor boys, both of the raja class, have left an indelible impression in my mind, the one of sheer perversity and the other of downright wickedness.

Raja Abass had been dubbed "Raja Abass B.A." by a College wag and the designation had stuck to him for the rest of his stay at the College. In this case, however, the letters B.A. were not meant to signify "Bachelor of Arts" but the contemptuous Malay words *Bangkai Ayam* (chicken's carcass).

He was called this in order to ridicule him on the grounds that he was a great mischief-maker, even though he suffered from arthritis of one of his knee-joints.

His reaction to what is generally known to be a painful disease was the opposite of what was expected, for instead of making him meek and mild, it had the contrary effect, for he was by nature an aggressive type of boy, prone to quarrel with one and all on the slightest pretext.

He deliberately flouted the doctor's advice not to participate in the game of football or in any event in athletic sports. After one of these indiscretions he used to suffer agonies of pain

and he would massage his swollen knee with embrocation, while his tears flowed freely on his cheeks. Yet while he was in this tearful state, he would spurn any attempts to sympathise with him.

He was, however, not devoid of intelligence, for he eventually passed the Junior Cambridge Examination and perhaps because of his unpopularity he left school as soon as the examination results were out. I was surprised to hear afterwards that he had been appointed a police inspector in spite of his arthritis. I have never met or heard of him since.

The other Selangor boy, Raja Ahmad, had the misfortune of having been born with a congenital shortness of one of his lower limbs. Perhaps it was due to this deformity that, as a young boy, he had already become such an imp of iniquity as made his parents decide to send him to the Malay College in the hope that the discipline of a boarding school might reform his character.

Be that as it may, when I first saw him at the *Sekolah Besar* (Big School), he was in Class II, the equivalent of the present Form III, which meant that he was of average intelligence.

He was a very short, obese and flabby boy of fifteen or sixteen with a round face very like that of the little midget with the unpronounceable name Herve Villechaize and called "Tattoo", who acts as Ricardo Montalban's factotum in the T.V. series *Fantasy Island*.

The only difference is that, whereas Ricardo Montalban's factotum has a pleasant humorous face, Raja Ahmad had a wicked-looking one.

He used to douse other boys with water and sometimes his own urine as they descended the steps from the dormitory to the classroom or the dining-hall. He bullied smaller boys by pinching, slapping and inflicting painful blows upon them with his fist or stamping upon their feet with his own.

These boys, however, soon learnt how to evade him, for being very fat and flabby as well as lame, he naturally could not run very fast so that he could never catch them.

In fact, his figure should be more accurately described as globular and as he ran clumsily to try and catch his intended victims, his flabby body could be seen to shake and quiver for all the world, like a large rounded lump of jelly.

Such a loathesome character would have been described by a

doctor as a "moral defective" and by a social worker as a juvenile delinquent. He should have been sent to a reform school rather than to a boarding school reputed to be the Eton of Malaya. It is therefore not to be wondered at that eventually Mr. Jermyn decided to send him packing back to Klang.

Glossary

abang — elder brother
adat — custom; customary law
adat perpateh — matrilineal custom originally brought over to Negri Sembilan by Minangkabau immigrants from Sumatra
air — water
air batu — ice
air batu kacang — an ice drink made with boiled black beans
air mawar — rose water
air tolak baja — water to ward off evil
akad — contract; agreement
akad nikah — the marriage contract; the actual ceremony of solemnising the marriage
alang — an uncle or aunt who is the third son or daughter in a family
anak — child
anak dara — virgin
anak kunchi — key
anak saudara — nephew or niece
andak — an uncle or aunt who is the fifth son or daughter in a family
andang — a torch made of dry coconut leaves
angin — wind
anjong — a room annexed to the *serambi*
antan — pestle
apam — a Malay cake
api — fire
arak — intoxicating drink
atap — roofing thatch made of the leaves of the *nipah* or *rembia* palm
ayam — chicken
baba — local-born Chinese
bada — Tamil word for "banana"
bagak — crazy
Bah — shortened form of "abah", meaning "father"; flood

bahasa — language
bahasa orang putih — the white man's language
bajang — a ghost
baju — coat, jacket or gown
baju labuh — the long bridal gown
bala — evil; ill-luck
balai — police station (Perak); the residence of an Undang in Negri Sembilan
balam — turtle-doves
Bang — short for "Abang", meaning "elder brother"; the muezzin's call to prayer
bangkai — the carcass of an animal
Banjarese — an inhabitant of Banjarmasin in Indonesian Kalimantan
barang — a thing; goods
batu — stone
bebarau — the bigger species of bulbul
bedak — face powder
belacan — shrimp paste
belang — banded
belakang — behind
belanja kahwin — the gift of money from the bridegroom to the bride
belukar — secondary jungle
berjalan-jalan — walk about
besar — big
bersanding — the formal "sitting side by side" of the bride and bridegroom at a Malay wedding
bertih — poprice
berzanji — a method of reading the biography of Prophet Mohammed
biji kani — a kind of nut
bomoh — a practitioner of the traditional Malay art of healing
bintang — star
berbintang-bintang — starry
buah — fruit
buah mempedal ayam — a jungle fruit
buaian — swing
bubur — broth
bujang — a young unmarried man or woman; a term of endearment when used by a father to address his son

buluh — bamboo
buluh dekut — a bamboo flute used to lure ground pigeons (*dekut*) into the trap
bumbun — a secret arbour
bunga — flower; the interest charged in a money transaction
calung — pot
candu — opium
cangkul — hoe
"cangkulling" — hoeing i.e. clearing with a hoe
cendol — a sweet drink with coconut milk
cik — equivalent to "Miss" as a form of address
chettiar — moneylender
cikgu — shortened term for "encik guru" which means "respected teacher"
cucuk — a measure of weight
dacing — daching
daki — dirt
Dato' — head of family or an elder; a term of relationship denoting grandparent; a term of distinction denoting a chieftain or nobleman
dara — virgin
daun — leaf
dayang-dayang — ladies-in-waiting
dekut — ground pigeon
dokoh — pendant
"duit khamis" — literally "Thursday money"
durian — a Malaysian fruit with a hard thorny shell
dusun — orchard
do'a — prayer
eddah — period of mourning
fekah — Islamic jurisprudence
gaji — salary
ganas — wild, predatory
gemala — luminous bezoar
gopong — coconut-shell container
goreng — to fry
goreng pisang — fried banana
gotong-royong — voluntary work
gula — sugar
gula melaka — a dark-brown sugar made from the sap of the *nau* palm

gulai — a Malay dish cooked with coconut milk and ground chillies
Hajjah — A female Muslim who has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca
halal — Arabic word meaning "permissible"
halus — fine, thin
hantu — ghost, evil spirit
haram — Arabic word meaning "forbidden" (sinful)
harimau — tiger
hari — day
Hari Raya — the day of the Muslim religious festival marking the end of the Fasting Month of *Ramadan*
harus — fitting; proper; possible
hati — heart
hikayat — a romance
hikmat — Arabic word which means "practical knowledge" such as enables a man to do the right thing in the right way
hijau — green
hujan — rain
ikan — fish
ikan baung — a species of catfish
ikan bilis — anchovy
ikan keli — another species of catfish
ikan rebus — boiled fish
ilmu faraid — division of property after a person's demise
imam — a Muslim prayer leader; leading jurist of a Muslim sect or school of theology or jurisprudence
Iti — shortened form of "Siti" which means "Lady" or "Madam"
jalan — road; street; as a verb "to walk"
jambul — a rectangular tuft of hair left above the forehead after shaving off the rest
jampi — incantation
janggut — beard
Jawi Pekan — the offspring of an Indian Muslim father and a Malay mother
jebat — the bad smelling musk of a particular species of civet cat called "musang jebat"
jebak — a cage-like bird trap
jelutung — a jungle tree yielding latex like that of rubber trees
jembia — a curved dagger

jin — genie
jubah — long, loose ankle-length gown worn by religious Muslims
kacang — groundnuts or peanuts; peas in general
kacang goreng — fried peanuts
kadi — a religious leader
kain belacu — unbleached cotton cloth
kak — short form of "kakak", meaning "elder sister"
kambing — goat
kampung — Malay village
kandang — corral
kandar — to carry on the shoulder
kebun — garden
kecil — small
kerang — cockles
kahwin — to marry
kasidah — Arabic non-religious song
keledek — sweet potato
kelengkan — gilt foil about 1½ mm broad used in embroidery work
"keloma" — the Chinese way of pronouncing the word "keroma" or dates
Kempeitai — Japanese military police
kemunting — a local shrub
kenduri — feast
kerani — clerk
keramat — shrine (the tomb of a saint)
kereta — carriage; car
keretapi — train
kering — dry
kerosang — brooch
ketut — tiny
ketumbar — coriander
ketupat — a Malay cake made of rice cooked in tiny baskets woven from tender coconut leaves
khatam — Arabic word meaning "the end" or "the conclusion"
kijang — barking deer
kiju — cheese
kompang — shallow Malay drum
korma — a kind of spicy curry
kudis — sores

kuih — cake
kunci — key
kuning — yellow
kunyit — saffron
kundang — binding; bandage; a Malayan fruit
labuh — long
lada — chilli; capsicum
lada kering — dried chilli
"lang" — shortened for "helang" which means "hawk"
lauk — a selection of food eaten with rice
layang-layang — kite; swallow; martin
lebai — a kampung religious leader
lemang — a Malay cake made with glutinous rice and steamed in a length of bamboo
lempuk — durian cake
lesung — wooden mortar
lesung pipit — dimple
lobak — Chinese radish
logat — vocabulary
"lok chuan" — Chinese for a very fine variety of silk
luak — territory ruled by a Negri Sembilan Undang
lukah — fish trap
"lumpok" — Penang patois for "lumpur" (mud)
mahmee — Chinese word meaning "macaroni"
mak — short for of "emak" which means "mother"
makan — eat
makruh — Arabic word meaning "hateful" or "abominable"
mancis api — matches
mandi — to bathe
Mat — shortened for of "Mohamed"
mas — gold
mas kahwin — literally "marriage gold"; in reality the nominal legal sum paid by the bridegroom to the bride's parents
"mee hoon" — Chinese word for the finer kind of macaroni
memikat — to snare (birds)
mempedal — gizzard
mengemping — to make "emping", a kind of rice resembling Quaker oats
mengganas — predatory; on the rampage
menggeloncor — to slide down
mengkuang — a kind of grass used for weaving mats

menyelam — to drive
merbah — the smaller species of bulbul
mercun — fire crackers
merah — red
merdeka — independence
minyak — oil
minyak gas — kerosene
Minangkabau — the territory in the highlands of Sumatra from which followers of the matrilineal customs migrated to Negri Sembilan and Malacca from the 16th century onwards
muda — young
mudin — circumciser
murai — magpie
munshi — a teacher of oriental language
muka bantal — gilt facings of wedding pillows and bolsters
murka — anger
musang — civet cat
Maghrib — one of the five daily Muslim prayers, performed at sunset
Nahu — grammar
nasi — rice
nasi lemak — rice cooked in coconut milk
nasi minyak — rice cooked in ghee
nenek — grandmother
nenek moyang — ancestors
Ngah — the second eldest uncle or aunt
nikah — the religious contract of marriage
orang — person
orang alim — a learned Muslim religious teacher or servant
orang putih — literally "white man"; refers to Westerners in general
otak — brain
padang — field
pagar — fence
Pak — short for "bapak" which means "father"
pantang — taboo or prohibition due to custom
pantis — Chinese paper lipstick
pantun — a stanza of 4 lines (quatrain) with alternate rhymes in Malay poetry
parang — chopper
pawang — a Malay kampung medicine man

pelamin — dais
pelantar — the unroofed section of a Malay house
pelita — a simple kampung lamp
pelesit — vampire
pemikat — snare
penanggah — a long temporary shed at which wedding guests are entertained to lunch or dinner
pendekar — a man skilled in the Malay art of self-defence
pendik — short
pengat — a sweetmeat composed of bananas, sweet potato, yam, sago, etc. cooked in coconut milk and sugar
pengetahuan — knowledge
pengempit tepi tikar — weights to prevent the edges of mats from curling up
pentas — an elaborately decorated platform or dais used as a bedstead in the house of a well-to-do kampung Malay; stage
penyepit — a kind of wooden forceps
peran — the loft of a Malay house
petai — the seed of a jungle tree eaten with rice as an appetiser
pikat — blood-sucking flies
pingit — a customary Malay practice of segregating young girls
pipit — a small chirping bird; the penis of a very young boy
piring — saucer
pulai — a lofty tree, *Hatonica scholaris*, which gives a light cork-like wood
pulut — glutinous rice
pundi-pundi — cloth pouch
pupu — a term of relationship (eg "sepupu" – first cousins, "duapupu" – second cousins)
pupur — burnt out fire place
putih — white
puttu piring — a Malay cake
Raja — King, prince
Raja Sehari — literally "One-day King" (nickname for a Malay bridegroom)
racik — a kind of bird snare
ratib — a mystic exercise involving repetition at ever increasing tempo and loudness the line "la-illa-ha-illalah" which means "there is no God but Allah"
reban — chicken coop
rebana — traditional Malay drum

rebus — boil
rendang — chicken or beef cooked with spices and coconut milk and eaten with rice
roti — bread
roti canai — unleavened bread made of flour and ghee
Rukun Islam — the five obligatory duties of a Muslim
Rukun Imam — the six Islamic fundamentals of the faith
runcit — bits and pieces
Sakai — aborigine
sambal — a condiment made of ground chillies and salt, generally with added "belacan" (shrimp paste)
sanggul — coiffure
sanggul lintang — transverse coiffure
saudara — relation
sawi — a green leafy vegetable
sawah — swampy land suitable for planting wet rice (paddy)
sejangut udang — literally "a lobster's antenna"
sekolah — school
seladang — wild oxen
selamat — safety, security; peace
seloka — ironical or satirical saying, usually in verse
selendang — long silk scarf worn by a Malay woman on either shoulder
seluar — trousers
senuduk — a species of shrub
sentak-sentak — a kind of fish-trap made of bamboo
sembah — obeisance
serambi — the long narrow verandah of a Malay house
serikaya — a Chinese sweetmeat eaten with bread and butter
serkap — a conical trap or coop
sireh — betel leaf
silat — Malay art of self-defence
suap — to place in the mouth
subuh — dawn
surah — a verse of the Koran
sumpitan — bamboo water squirters
surah — a verse of the Koran
songkok — brimless Malay cap made of black velvet, 3 – 4 inches high
syair — verse; versified romance
tabir — wall drapery

tahi — faeces, excrement
taman — garden; pleasure-ground
tambi — peon; office-boy; errand boy
tambul — refreshments
Tan Sri — a new title created after Independence by which those honoured with the order P.M.N. (Panglima Mangku Negara) are addressed
tangga kambing — literally "goat's steps" or stairs but the phrase means the cheapest seats in a bangsawan or circus performance held in a large tent. The seats comprise rows of step-like plank seat constructed all round the inside of the tent
tangga — house-ladder, staircase
Tarekat — Arabic word meaning "The Path" or "The Way of the Mystic"
tahlil — Arabic song of Praise to God sung by repeating "la-illa-ha-illalah"
tari — to dance
"*tarok*" — Patani pronunciation of the word "taruh", meaning "put"
tassauf — Arabic word which means "mysticism"
tarikh — date
tawliah — letter of appointment signed by the Ruler
tanjak — ceremonial Malay head-dress
tejuid — strict rules of pronunciation for the reading of the Koran
telur merah — hard-boiled eggs dyed red in colour presented to guests at a Malay wedding
telur asin — salted eggs
tembaga — copper
tempayan — jar
tempoyak — fermented flesh of the durian fruit eaten with sambal as an appetiser
tempurung — coconut shell
tempoyan — a local fruit tree
tengah — middle
tengah rumah — the middle (main) section of a Malay house
tengkolok — synonymous with "tanjak"
tepung — flour
tepung tawar — an emulsion of rice flour sprinkled on the hands of the bride and bridegroom to avert evil or ill-luck
tepi — edge

terang — bright
terap — a tree, *Artocarpus Kunsteri*, the underbark from which the cord for spinning tops is made
tikar — mat made of "mengkuang" (screwpine) leaves
tiram — oyster
tikus — mouse
Toh Puan — the title by which the wife of a "Tun" is addressed
Tok Aki — grandfather
tolak — push, ward off
tuan — master; employer; lord (eg Tuan Jim – "Lord Jim", the title of Joseph Conrad's novel)
Tuan Puteri — Princess
tudung — a cover
tudung lingkup — a sarong worn in the old days over the upper part of the body by a young unmarried Malay woman to conceal her face
tujuh likur — three days before *Hari Raya Puasa*
tukang — a skilled craftsman
tukang andam — the woman who is skilful in dressing the bride at a Malay wedding
tumbuk — to pound with a pestle
Tun — the ancient hereditary title of the bendaharas of medieval Malacca and their families. Revived as the highest award conferred by the Yang di Pertuan Agong
tunang — betrothed
tunggal — lone; single
ucu — the youngest uncle or aunt
udang — prawn; shrimp
udang galah — lobster
ulas — the pip of the durian or any other similar fruit with the surrounding flesh
Undang — one of the four Ruling Chiefs in Negri Sembilan. Together they elect the Yang di Pertuan Besar of the state
Wahabi — a Muslim sect
wakaf — adoption
Wan — In Negri Sembilan the word is used to designate a female descendant of the Prophet Mohammed. In Perak and Pahang it is the title used by the scions of the higher nobility
warak — pious; very religious
waris — heir apparent
wasiat — will-making

wayang — stage play
wayang bangsawan — Malay opera
wudzu — pre-prayer ablutions
yam — short for "meriam"
yasin — the Muslim prayers read by the side of a dying person
zikir — the chanting of Arabic religious songs