
DUM SPIRO SPERO

GLIMPSES OF SARAWAK BETWEEN 1912 AND 1946

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL EXTRACTS AND ARTICLES OF AN OFFICER OF THE RAJAHS

Glimpses of Sarawak between 1912 and 1946

Autobiographical Extracts and Articles of an Officer of the Rajahs

John Beville Archer (1893-1948)

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with an Introduction by Vernon L Porritt
and a Foreword by the Chief Minister of Sarawak

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Foreword

I am glad to write this foreword to the autobiographical extracts of the late John Beville Archer and selected articles written by him under the pen name of Optimistic Fiddler which appeared in the Sarawak Gazette years ago.

The late J.B. Archer had a colourful and distinguished career in the Sarawak Civil Service during the Brooke era. He was recruited by Charles Brooke personally and entered the Brooke's government service at the age of nineteen in 1912. After years of service, first as a cadet and later as a district officer, he rose to the rank of Resident of a division and was eventually appointed Chief Secretary in 1939 before his first retirement in 1941. He remained in Sarawak after retirement to assume war time duties as Information Officer and a Special Policeman. He was among those interned by the Japanese when the Japanese Army invaded and occupied Sarawak.

The years of internment impaired his health, but he returned to serve in the rehabilitation of Sarawak as Political Adviser to the British Military Administration and as Acting Chief Secretary on the restoration of civil administration under the Brooke regime.

It was as Acting Chief Secretary that J.B. Archer had the unpleasant and to him the traumatic duty of carrying out the wishes of Rajah Charles Vyner Brooke of the cession of Sarawak to Britain and presiding over the Council Negeri that met to approve it. In his years of service in Sarawak he had come to love the country and its people, and though his loyalty to the Rajah dictated his action, deep in his heart he must have felt that it was a betrayal of the trust that the Rajah had pledged to uphold when the 1941 Constitution was promulgated to commemorate 100 years of Brooke Rule.

There is much of historical interest in the autobiographical extracts and readers should find the book entertaining, amusing and informative. I commend Dr. V.L. Porritt for his work in collecting J.B. Archer's papers for publication in this book and also the beneficiaries of his estate for agreeing to their release without which this would not be possible.

DATUK PATINGGI TAN SRI (DR) HAJI ABDUL TAIB MAHMUD
Chief Minister of Sarawak

Acknowledgements

The autobiographical extracts by John Beville Archer in this volume were written between 1946 and 1948 after Archer finally retired from government service. Copyright to the autobiography is held by his nephew, Mr. Owen F. Wright, who, together with his daughter Mrs. Sylvia Osman and her family, has kindly agreed to publication. Owen, a former civil servant in Sarawak attached to the Department of Agriculture, was in Sarawak at the time of his uncle's death and was actually staying in his uncle's house at the time. His recollections of that time have been helpful in providing an impression of Archer's personality and the stresses he faced in the early post-World War Two (WWII) period.

Thanks are also due to Archer's colleagues who have generously recorded their memories of Archer and events extending as far back as the 1930s. The contribution of that small band on whom time and health is taking its toll is in itself a tribute to the dedication of the Sarawak Administrative Service of the Brookes and the missionaries of that era, a worthy heritage for their successors.

Their recollections together with records and studies of the period provided the material for the Introduction which seeks to give the reader an impression of Archer the man, as well as unrecorded aspects and the background of major events recorded in his autobiography.

Also appreciation is recorded of the help of Associate Professor Bob Reece in bringing this project to fruition.

For the record, those to whom thanks are due are listed below.

R. Bewsher; pre-WWII missionary, internee in Kuching during WWII, and post-war Sarawak civil servant on community development work.

A. Brooke; Rajah Muda (heir to the third Rajah), founder of Operation Peace Through Unity.

K.H. Digby; pre-WWII Sarawak Administrative Service Officer, internee in Kuching during the Japanese occupation, post-WWII Attorney General.

P.H.H. Howes (Rt. Rev.); pre- and post-WWII missionary, internee in Kuching during the Japanese occupation.

R.H. Morris; WWII Australian Army Officer, post-WWII Sarawak Administrative Service Officer, finally as Resident.

Ong Kee Hui (Tan Sri Datuk); pre-WWII Agricultural Officer, post-WWII banker and later a leading state and federal politician.

J. Pike; British Army Officer; post-WWII Sarawak Administrative Service Officer, finally as Financial Secretary.

R.H.W. Reece; Associate Professor, Murdoch University, Perth.

A.J.N. Richards; pre- and post-war Sarawak Administrative Service Officer, finally as Resident; author of an Iban dictionary.

O.F. Wright; nephew of J.B. Archer, post-WWII Agricultural Officer, finally as Deputy Director.

Glossary

Abang:	Malay aristocratic title
anchau:	line fishing
bandong:	covered fishing boat with large lugsail
bangsawan:	Malay opera
bantut:	witch doctor able to change his gender
barong:	covered fishing boat with lugsails
batek:	Javanese patterned cloth
bawa:	to carry
bedar:	two-man canoe
begawai:	feast
blachu:	plain cloth
Chap Goh Mei:	Lantern Festival
chawat:	Dayak loin cloth
depa:	6 feet (1.85 metres)
Dyak:	Dayak
dua:	two
fan-tan:	Chinese card game
fajar:	dawn
Hadji:	Haji
hari:	day
Juragan:	skipper
kain:	cloth
kain perlas:	sarong cloth
kajang:	woven palm cover
kajang s'krat:	four-man canoe
kati:	0.6 kilograms
keladi:	yam
kut:	canal cutting
lukar:	cowry shell
main:	entertainment
makin:	to become
padang:	field
panau:	open fishing boat with lugsails
pantun:	quatrain
pikul:	weight measure
pukat:	drag-net
punei:	type of pigeon
saise:	vehicle driver
roti cabin:	a type of biscuit
tahan:	withstand
temoi:	canoe type
terai:	cloth head dress
tuak:	rice alcohol
tuko:	small sail boat
tutup:	to close
waktu:	time

Plates

Front Cover

A day at the races in Kuching circa 1940; a major event in the social calendar of Sarawak. J. B. Archer was an official of the Sarawak Turf Club for many years. (Courtesy of Raymond Allas)

Frontispiece: Coat of Arms of Sarawak during the Brooke Era
Between Parts One and Two, pp. 64-65.

1 J. B. Archer, 1927. (Courtesy of Owen Wright)
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3 J. B. Archer and his wife, Bilam, in 1946. (Courtesy of Owen Wright)
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5 J. B. Archer wearing the insignia of Master of the Order of the Star of Sarawak. (Courtesy of Owen Wright)
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7 The Residency at Simanggang, one of Archer's postings. (Courtesy of Owen Wright)
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10 The official signing and witnessing of the Cession Document on 21 May 1946. Seated in the front row from left to right are the Rajah, Charles Vyner Brooke; C. W. Dawson, the British Representative, and Ong Tiang Swee, the leader of Sarawak's Chinese community. J. B. Archer is standing between the Rajah and C. W. Dawson. (Courtesy of Raymond Allas)
11 Waiting for the Governor-General to arrive for the Cession ceremony. J. B. Archer is in the centre, wearing a white suit and topee, with C. W. Dawson, the British Representative, on his left. (Courtesy of Owen Wright)
12 Official Parade on Cession to Britain, 1 July 1946. In the front are the Governor-General Malcolm MacDonald and his Aide-de-Camp Captain B. Morgan. In the rear are J. B. Archer in a white suit and topee and the British Representative, C. W. Dawson. (Courtesy of Owen Wright)

Introduction

J. B. Archer was recruited from the Channel Islands as a nineteen-year old cadet in the Sarawak Administrative Service by the Second Rajah, Sir Charles Brooke, in 1912. He spent many years in the outstations where after being promoted to Resident status in 1930 he had the delegated power of the Rajah in the Division under his control.* Archer was the archetypal outstation officer, well versed in several local languages and imbued with the Brooke concepts of government that were idealized in the 1941 Constitution of Sarawak. He held the post of Chief Secretary, the highest in the Service, on two occasions prior to cession of the state to Britain in 1946 and his retirement at that time. As Chief Secretary, he had on occasion also acted as Officer Administering the Government during the Rajah's absence. Archer was a prolific letter writer with a journalistic style which is both informative and entertaining. Having served in a wide range of posts in Sarawak, he was ideally placed to write on most aspects of the late Brooke era. The extracts from his autobiography and the selection of his articles in this volume provide an absorbing account of some of the important events in Sarawak between 1912 and 1946 and give a fascinating insight into the local way of life and local customs during that era.

Throughout Archer's period of service, Sarawak was an independent sovereign state under the protection of Britain. From 1476 to 1841, it had been an appanage of the Sultanate of Brunei, but by the late 1830s the Sultan's administrators had lost the support of the Malays and the Bidayuh in Sarawak. Order was restored with the help of James Brooke. In 1841, James was granted stewardship of Sarawak by the Sultanate, albeit with some reluctance, and as the first Rajah of Sarawak, James established the Brooke dynasty that lasted for one hundred years. In 1841, Sarawak's population was about 10,000 and it covered an area of some 6,800 square kilometres centred on the Sarawak River on the north-west coast of Borneo facing the South China Sea. By 1905 following the annexations from the Brunei Sultanate and the transfer of the Lawas River District by the British North Borneo Company to Sarawak, the State had reached its current boundaries, encompassing some 125,000 square kilometres with about 260,000 inhabitants.

In 1912 the Senior Administrative Service of Sarawak in the field consisted of four Residents with sixteen assistants governing some 300,000 to 400,000 people. These were mainly Bidayuh, Iban, Malay, and a growing number of Chinese immigrants attracted to Sarawak by offers of land. The Residents were absolute rulers in the areas under their control and were answerable only to the Rajah. They governed through traditional leaders and Native Officers, the latter usually drawn from the families of Kuching's Malay elite. Following the example of the first and second Rajahs, Senior Administrative Service officers mixed freely with the local people and by tradition their doors were open to everyone, however humble. Many of them built up an impressive knowledge of local languages and customs and many married or had long term relationships with local women.

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* Appendix 1 lists Archer's postings in the Sarawak Administrative Service.

By 1912 the Brooke dynasty had reached its zenith. Territorial expansion had come to an end in 1905. A succession of punitive expeditions had quelled piracy and dissent and had imposed Brooke rule over the fiercely independent egalitarian native people living in the interior. Although far from wealthy, the state was economically viable after decades of stringent financial control under the second Rajah. European capital investment in agriculture with its associated large plantations and coolie type labour force was deliberately eschewed in favour of farmers who owned their land. The mainstay of the economy was mixed subsistence and cash crop farming by indigenous customary shifting cultivation and intensive settled agriculture by Chinese on small holdings. Mineral exploitation was being vigorously pursued, mainly employing migrant Chinese labour working under the harsh conditions then prevalent in mining.

The second Rajah was eighty-two years old and had been the effective ruler for sixty years. His successor, Charles Vyner Brooke, took over in 1918 and gradually delegated much of the burden of governing to his senior administrators. Sarawak's first constitution in 1941 curtailed the Rajah's powers to those of a constitutional monarchy, but the Japanese invasion in late 1941 intervened before it could be put into practice. Liberation by Australian troops in 1945 was generally greeted with relief. However, the Rajah's decision in early 1946 to cede control to Britain was resented by many Sarawak Malays, but nevertheless, Sarawak became a British colony on 1 July 1946.

This was the fascinating period in Sarawak's history when J. B. Archer served in Sarawak. Born on 22 January 1893, he was the second son of Dr H. R. Archer. After being educated at Victoria College, Jersey, and at H.M.S. *Worcester*, he joined the Sarawak Administrative Service at the age of nineteen. His fellow officers described him as lean and dark-haired, about six feet tall with a slight stoop, and the aquiline features, bearing, and manner of a feudal English squire. A well-read man with a deeply ingrained sense of loyalty, he was an efficient administrator and when he worked in the Secretariat in Kuching, had a notice on his desk reading "DO IT NOW"! Although generally good-humoured, he had a sharp temper and was a highly strung individual. He always carried a hunting horn, symbolising his life-long passion for riding and hunting. As an avid supporter of the Turf Club, Archer owned race horses and was usually a member of one of its various committees.

Archer also had an abiding interest in writing. District Officers and Residents wrote regular reports on events in their areas which were published in the *Sarawak Gazette*, a government publication started in 1870. This was the only regular English language publication published locally prior to 1946. In addition to such reports, Archer also wrote descriptive articles on life in Sarawak in a lively and journalistic style. As the Editor of the *Gazette* in 1922, 1929, and 1941, he was well aware of the shortage of suitable material for publication and criticisms that the *Gazette* was not very interesting, which he sought to redress. His letters and articles appeared under the pseudonym of *Optimistic Fiddler*, a name acquired after being asked at a party if he played the violin, to which he replied with his unmistakable stammer that he did not know because he had never tried! When he was the Resident of the Fourth Division in the 1930s, he even started up a magazine similar to *Punch*, the famous icon of English whimsical humour. Unfortunately the venture proved short-lived,

indicating he overlooked securing support from the *Sarawak Oilfields Ltd.* upon which Miri was almost entirely economically dependent.

On Archer's private life prior to his marriage, when he was transferred from one outstation to another he is said to have sent a telegram to the Resident of his old station asking that his 'toolbox' be sent to him. This cryptic message was worded to conceal its real objective from prying eyes in the office and the Resident quietly arranged for Archer's lady at that time to join him at his new posting. Archer had one son, William, who was born in about 1915 from a liaison with a local Chinese lady. William looked after his father's horses in Miri in his youth, followed by an apprenticeship with United Engineers in Singapore. Towards the end of World War Two, William was interned for a while in Singapore's Sime Road Camp and returned to Sarawak after liberation, eventually taking up employment with the Shell Company in Miri. Some time after William was born, Archer met Dayang Jami-ah (Bilam), a pleasant, pretty, cheerful woman of Melanau or Bunyok kin. When it became evident in 1941 that Sarawak was likely to be affected by World War Two, Archer married Bilam, thus ensuring her future financial security should anything happen to him. This marriage was carried out in accordance with Islamic rites, a very rare event where the marriage involved a European at that time.

Archer had two very distinctive characteristics. The first was a debilitating stutter when he was speaking in English, although curiously not when speaking in Malay or Iban, so his dealings with the indigenous people were not impaired. This trait was also apparent in some of his fellow officers, but in a less acute form. In one well-known but possibly apocryphal story, when Archer was adjudicating in a court case, the Chinese defendant was having some difficulty in answering the prosecutor's questions due to a pronounced stutter. Thinking he was being parodied, Archer fined him $1 for contempt of court! Also when he was the Resident of the Fourth Division, he had a furious argument in the Miri Club with an American oil driller who also stuttered. The ensuing spectacle was still remembered fifty years later by those present. The other characteristic so necessary for field officers in Sarawak who regularly toured their domain was his legendary capacity for alcohol. Gradually this became an addiction and later in his life his fellow officers had to help him home occasionally after a night at the Club. However, his recuperative powers were also legendary. After going to the Club at midday on Saturday and not leaving until three a.m. on Monday morning, he was renowned for turning up at a friend's house in full riding kit three hours later to go riding.

Lack of alcohol was felt as a severe deprivation by a group of the older civilians interned by the Japanese following their occupation of Sarawak on 24 December 1941. In the early days of internment, the group sent a letter to the Officer in Command of Japanese Forces asking permission to buy supplies from the bazaar, possibly not expecting and certainly not receiving any reply. For Archer, however, absence of alcohol was beneficial and according to fellow internees, gradually emerged as a tower of strength. Also during internment, he was absolved from earlier ecclesiastical censure over his Islamic form of marriage to Bilam and became a weekly communicant, regularly attending the Anglican services given by Bishop Hollis, Bishop Howes, Archdeacon Mercer and others.

On one occasion when he did not respond quickly enough to a command to pick up some rubbish, the guard thrust his bayonet through the front of Archer's footwear, fortunately just missing his foot. At the request of the General Committee of the Batu Lintang Internment Camp, Archer became the custodian of official Camp records and in March 1946 he published the records under the title *Lintang Camp*. In Archer's own understatement, these alone sufficed to "condemn the Japanese Authorities" for their treatment of the internees. During the early days of captivity in 1942, a few individuals incurred the displeasure of the Committee for what was felt to be their anti-social attitude and their names were recorded in the Committee's minutes. Later Archer made a unilateral decision to exclude the minutes naming the individuals from the official record. He was criticised in some quarters for doing so, but his decision spared the individuals concerned from public embarrassment and freed surviving members of the Committee from any concerns over litigation for libel. Together with many of his contemporaries, he was aggrieved that serious collaborators with the Japanese in Sarawak were never tried or punished. As Political Adviser to the Military Authorities after liberation, he made his feelings clear by opposing permission being granted to any Japanese to stay in Sarawak after the war, however impeccable their pre-war and occupation record.

There are three events in the extracts from Archer's autobiography that warrant further explanation and amplification. The first is the background to his appointment as Chief Secretary. In the mid 1930s members of the Committee of Administration, the body that administered the government whenever the Rajah was not in Kuching, began a highly controversial move to centralise power in Kuching and abolish the Residencies. Anthony Brooke, the Rajah's nephew and a proponent of decentralised power, triggered an inquiry into the Committee's dismissal of a junior officer in 1939, thus questioning the Committee's authority. The Rajah failed to give the Committee the backing it deemed necessary and the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary, the Chief Justice, the Superintendent of Lands and Surveys, and the Principal Medical Officer resigned *en masse*. As Archer was a party to the Committee's decisions, some members of the Administrative Service felt he was rather opportunist when, as the senior officer remaining after the resignations, he was offered and accepted the post of Chief Secretary.

The second is how the 1941 Constitution of Sarawak came about. Shortly after Archer became Chief Secretary on 1 April 1939, a period of political intrigue began to unfold. By January 1940, the third Rajah, Charles Vyner Brooke, had lost faith in the Rajah Muda,* his nephew Anthony Brooke, as a suitable heir and proceeded to disinherit him. This was followed in 1941 by a series of convoluted negotiations triggered by the Rajah's *ad hoc* demands on the Treasury. To provide for the Rajah and his family's future financial security, and at the same time eliminate his *ad hoc* demands on the treasury, a *quid pro quo* was reached between the Rajah and the Committee of Administration under which he would become a constitutional monarch. When the constitution to put this into effect was being drafted, Archer began to resist the diminution of the Rajah's powers, apparently having decided that

* Rajah Muda, literally 'The Young Rajah', the official designation of the Rajah's heir.

the new constitution was being forced through against the Rajah's will. The outcome was Archer's dismissal on 2 May 1941 on terms that left him none the worse off financially and that was somewhat euphemistically termed 'permission to resign his appointments'.

The third is the invidious position in which Archer was placed over the Rajah's decision to cede the sovereign state of Sarawak to Britain. Although far from fit physically and psychologically, Archer remained in Kuching after liberation on 11 September 1945, taking no leave to recuperate from the ordeal of internment. In his role as Political Adviser to the Allied military authorities, he must have been aware of payments by the Rajah's agent and Political Secretary, Gerard MacBryan, to local leaders in January 1946, which could be construed as being given to secure their support for cession of Sarawak to Britain. Following the Rajah's official statement on 6 February 1946 that Sarawak would be ceded, Archer and a number of other pre-war Brooke officers were torn between their conviction that Sarawak would not benefit from control by the Colonial Office and their duty to the Rajah to carry out his instructions. Archer's position became more difficult after the Rajah arrived in Sarawak on 15 April 1946 and appointed him Chief Secretary. By that time it was becoming apparent that many Malays viewed handing over the country's sovereignty to Britain and the possible loss of the leading role of their hereditary leaders with abhorrence.

His dilemma became even more pronounced on 16 May 1946 when in his capacity as President of the Council Negri he had to put forward the Rajah's case in favour of cession. He even had to exercise his casting vote in support of the motion on the second reading to have the bill carried. The strain Archer was under in the Council was so evident that the British Representative with plenipotentiary powers, C. W. Dawson, wrote in his diary that Archer was either drunk or drugged with benzedrine at the time. Dawson conceded however that without Archer's support, cession was unlikely to have eventuated. Immediately after the Council Negri meeting, far from celebrating his success in carrying the motion, Archer retired to the privacy of the Sarawak Club and expressed in no uncertain terms his distaste for cession to his colleagues. Adding to Archer's stress, the Tuan Muda,* Bertram Brooke, had asked him how much he "was getting out of it", to which he took strong exception. Some time later after his car tyres had been slashed and he had received threats from anti-cessionists, he was given a Luger pistol with some ammunition for self-protection.

After the Rajah left Sarawak on 21 May and Archer became the Officer Administering the Government, he became increasingly unstable and by 25 June was in hospital with alcohol-related symptoms. The privations of the war years and the stresses of the post-war period had began to take their toll. However, his legendary stamina prevailed and he managed to recover in time to hand over the reins of government on behalf of the Rajah to the British Government represented by Malcolm MacDonald as Governor-General, British Territories, South-East Asia, on 1 July 1946. There is an uncorroborated and somewhat unlikely story that Archer

* Tuan Muda, the title of the Rajah's heir presumptive in the event of no direct male lineage.

applied for the governorship of Sarawak. He was then 54 years old and still one year below the official retirement age. Although Sarawak was in dire need of experienced officers, he was not offered any active role in the colonial government, but was honoured by being made a Companion of the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George (C.M.G.) by King George VI on 1 January 1947.

After cession, he made a visit of some months to the place of his birth, the Channel Islands, but otherwise lived in the Hill Bungalow in Kuching, a pleasant residence allocated to him for the duration of his life. Reflecting his continuing passion for riding, he became the chairman of the Sarawak Turf Club when its first post-war meeting was held on 3 June 1946. During the Japanese occupation, the race-course had been used for growing food crops and the Club buildings had been vandalised and fallen into dereliction. Archer was one of the driving forces behind the reconstruction of the race course and erecting new Club buildings after the occupation. Later he became the Honorary Secretary to the Club, issuing a statement published in the *Straits Times*, Singapore, on 17 July 1948 that racing would re-commence in 1949. He also occupied himself with writing his autobiography and wrote a chapter on Sarawak for *The British Empire* edited by H. H. Bolitho, which was published in 1948. In this, he wrote that most of the die-hards who opposed cession would agree eventually that the third Rajah was right and cession was in Sarawak's best interests. In view of the feelings he expressed privately, this was possibly a political statement rather than his own convictions. He was acutely aware that the anti-cession campaign was still very active, which must have caused him considerable distress. About 380 Malays in government service had resigned at the end of 1946, the Malay community was deeply divided, and there was a feeling amongst some of the older Sarawak hands that the first governor, Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, was adopting an over-authoritarian approach that was alien to Sarawak.

Shortly after lunch on Saturday, 17 July 1948, the day his announcement about rebuilding the Turf Club appeared in the *Straits Times*, Archer retired to his bedroom, took his revolver, held it to his forehead, and pulled the trigger. Unconscious, he was taken in his own car to the General Hospital by his nephew, Owen Wright, who was in the house at the time. Archer died there a few hours later. It was not a pretty sight for the coroner, A. J. N. Richards, who had to view the body later. At the official inquest, Chai Ah Yap, the manager of his financial affairs, told the coroner that Archer had no financial problems, but that he had taken to drinking rather heavily in the preceding few days. Dr M. Sockalingam then made a statement that Archer was suffering from alcoholism and that at times he suffered from deep depressions and hallucinations. The coroner's verdict was that Archer had taken his own life when suffering from a great depression mainly due to personal matters which were not revealed to the court.

At the time of his death, his marriage to Bilam had become no more than in name only and he had very little contact with his son. There had been the trauma of internment and the stress of ensuring the Cession Bill was passed, even though he had no empathy with it. He had not been given any role in post-cession Sarawak where he could have felt useful at a time of transition and had personally felt the divisive effect of cession on the Malay community. Changes in the Secretariat from the unique style of the Brookes to the more remote Colonial Office style bureaucracy and an

authoritarian governor was very distressful to Archer and many other Brooke officers who were proud of their close and friendly relationship with the people. Archer was certainly very concerned about the future of Sarawak at that time and no doubt the role he had played. The final catalyst may well have been the news he had just received that Anthony Brooke and his father were challenging the legality of cession, threatening further turmoil. Since the suit also called for an accounting of monies transferred to the Rajah's private account, allegedly £200,000 in 1941, his disillusionment must have been complete.

For his part in cession, Archer has not been viewed favourably by the anti-cessionists and their familial and political descendants in Sarawak. The merits and demerits of trading the independence of a self-governing protected state for a short-lived colonial status which opened up the resources of the British Commonwealth to help the country recover from the dereliction of the Japanese occupation are open to debate. Certainly an enormous burden was placed on Archer by the conflicting demands of his loyalty to the Rajah and carrying out instructions which he was not sure were in the best interests of Sarawak. He chose loyalty. His misgivings over cession had not been extinguished at the time of his death in 1948, although he had written shortly after cession in 1946 that

> when there has been time for reflection and when the results of administration as a Crown Colony begin to emerge, it is probable that most of the die-hards will admit that the last Rajah of Sarawak was right.*

As a faithful servant of the Brookes whose sovereignty many if not most of the people in Sarawak would have liked to see continue, may Archer Road in Sibu continue to be a modest reminder of Archer's life of dedication to Sarawak to future generations.**

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* John Beville Archer, 'Sarawak' in H. H. Bolitho (ed.), *The British Empire*, London: B. T. Batsford, June 1948, p. 212.

** See also the article by Vic Porritt, 'The Optimistic Fiddler - John Beville Archer, 1893-1948', in the *Sarawak Gazette*, Vol. CXXII, No. 1532, June 1995, pp. 8-14.

Part One

Autobiography

I

Joining the Service of the Rajah

There are several histories of Sarawak; some accurate but dull; others inaccurate and still dull; and one or two personal accounts (rather like this, I hope) which do give readers a vivid picture.

Present day Government Officers will no doubt be surprised at the way I joined the Rajah's service. After trying my hand at several things, one day a cousin told me that she knew someone in the War Office who knew an Admiral who was a friend of the Rajah of Sarawak. In this way an introduction was effected.

No time was lost in those days. I received a letter from the Rajah, who was in England at the time, to go and see him. Down I went, saw the very awe-inspiring old man, answered a few questions (the only one I can remember was "did I ride a horse?"), was engaged and told to sail in seven days time, in January, 1912.

The Rajah gave me £5 ($42.85) and my father gave me a similar amount. With this in my pockets, I left for Singapore by an old Japanese ship. I remember having a fine time there rushing around in rickshaws and gharries (pony carriages), running up a debt at John Little's (a large European store at the time), borrowing money off the Government Agent (for I had none) and in due course sailing for Kuching.

First Glimpse

Nearly two days later we sighted Cape Datu, my first glimpse of this delectable land. I shall never forget that landfall - some things for ever remain in one's memory, however dimmed it may have become by turmoil and the passage of years. It was at the time of that first streak of dawn, for which Malays have such a poetical name, *waktu fajar*. Out of the dusky gloom loomed gigantic headlands and mountains, which gradually and very gently became transformed into rosy pink as the sun rose and the sea, so recently a dull opaque blue, became translucent. Here I said was the

land for me. The vapourings of a sentimental young man. Later, how often I swore to leave it for good, only to return to it with added joy in my heart each time.

On we went up the Sarawak River - past muddy banks and mangrove swamps.

Presently we came to the town of Kuching. To the right of us was a fort, surely a real "Beau Gest" fort, although I hardly think that those books existed then; and on our right a jail (now Pangkalan Batu Police Post) of similar design, all dazzlingly white in the sunlight.

The Rajah's Palace looked just what one expected from a White Rajah - not like a Palace at all - and all merged into a mixture of roofs, masts, and trees; surely a spectacle for my delighted eyes.

They say that nowhere is so lonely as London; that may be true, but what a lonely arrival I had! Cadets were very unimportant and no one took the slightest notice of us (there were two)) except one young man who came on board and told us a funny story and went off again. However, we arrived in the end at the Rest House. No one had been informed of our arrival, and no one seemed to know who we were. We had no money and no friends. However, things straightened themselves out, and I found myself sitting in the Rajah's office (he was still in England) with a Malay dictionary in front of me and told to be seen and not heard. There, I had to stay day after day learning Malay *pantuns* and Jawi script as nothing could be done until the Rajah's return. Eventually he arrived and it galvanised the whole place into feverish activity. As expected, I was sent to an outstation, the Rajah having no use in Kuching for Cadets who were only just learning to speak Malay.

The Second Rajah

Most men of genius are peculiar - in fact it is this that lifts them out of the rut of millions of their more orthodox contemporaries. Even if we make fun of them, there is always a sneaking envy of their oddities, which make such useful copy for the music-hall or that awful bore, the teller of anecdotes.

Rajah Sir Charles Brooke was not quite a genius and undoubtedly too had peculiarities which lend themselves to biographers. Few can have any idea what Rajah Sir Charles Brooke was really like. My own knowledge of him extended over a period of five years and I frankly admit that the dread of meeting him invariably paralysed the few brains I had in those far off days. You must remember that Charles Brooke was dictator long before the days of those who came after him in Europe.

It is probable that never was an absolute ruler so devoid of all pomp and pageantry and yet so autocratic. Picture to yourself a spare old man of eighty years of age, of middle height, deaf in one ear, blind in one eye and generally dressed in an old blue serge coat, striped trousers which looked like pyjama ones, white sun helmet with a red silk band, elastic side boots and a high collar. His disabilities, however, did not appear to hamper him in the least. It was his custom to board his steam yacht "Zahora" lying in mid river two or three mornings each week and what he saw with

the aid of a telescope, deterred many a man from slipping out of the office during the morning.

It is said that he bought his false eyes by the gross irrespective of size and colour. Personally, I was generally too terrified to notice such things closely and he certainly heard all he wanted to hear in spite of being deaf in one ear.

Alphonse's Mistake

I remember one occasion when he was foiled. Two newly-arrived married ladies had just arrived in Kuching and were invited to the Astana for dinner. Orders had been given to Alphonse, the Rajah's French valet-cum-butler, to place Mrs. A on the Rajah's right and Mrs. B on his left. Now there was a very good reason for this. Mrs. A was what is nowadays called a glamour girl but unable to make conversation; whereas Mrs. B was not at all attractive but a most intelligent talker. Alas! Alphonse got the names mixed and the furious Rajah spent a long dinner in vain attempts to see the lovely looking lady with his blind eye and listen to the clever lady with his deaf ear. I really think Alphonse was the only person of whom the Rajah was afraid. Stories go that when the Rajah entered the Foreign Office even Permanent Under-Secretaries hid behind office screens. It is said that on at least one occasion Lord Salisbury locked himself in a lavatory rather than face the irate old man!

Having served in the Royal Navy in his youth, the Rajah always kept up certain naval traditions when at sea in his yacht the "Zahora". I think his favourite nautical jest was what you might call "the after lunch cheroot test". When a party of officials were travelling with him and especially if the vessel was rolling a bit, which was quite often, the Rajah would hand round his own cigar case after lunch. If you had known the Rajah as well as I did you will realise why no one dared refuse one. I do not say that the cigars were definitely bad, but let us say that they were black, long and rather juicy. Personally I think the Rajah had a private sweepstake as to who bolted from the cabin first. I attribute my retention in the service owing to having a cast-iron stomach; so much so that it enabled me to sit it out with the Rajah, cheroot for cheroot.

The Rajah's Likes and Dislikes

Like most great men the Rajah had strong likes and dislikes, One gathered that doctors, lawyers, pink hunting coats and the Foreign Office (later the Colonial Office too) displeased him; on the other hand he liked music, all animals except dogs, the United States and seeing his guests happy. His great cure for all ills was champagne, although he drank very little himself.

I say the Rajah disliked lawyers, but that may not be quite true. All he did was to keep them out of the country as long as he lived.

Even if one of his own orders, published with others, starts "In future all wooden shophouses shall be built of brick" may lend itself to legal criticism, the important thing was that the people who read it knew what it meant.

The Rajah was never a man for comfort himself and I suppose that many stories are untrue, but in the absence of its owner the Rajah did have a bedstead sawn in half lengthways as he disliked (so the tale goes), his bachelor District Officers having such wide couches. The fact that on his return the District Officer explained that it was his own property and not a Government issue did not impede the Rajah who then proceeded to have the leg-rests of a Bombay chair sawn off.

If an "arty" District Officer had cushions on his verandah chairs, the Rajah sat on the steps!

His recommendations to a punitive expedition which was about to start off against head-hunters, was to take, in food and drink, "several kegs of brandy and nothing else".

The Dayaks looked upon the Rajah as not quite human and I think we did too. To me the Rajah was a god - at times a terrifying god - a strange god - but a god to be respected.

II

The Cadet

Before leaving England, I was firmly convinced that my work in Sarawak would be something like that of a mounted policeman but by the time I reached my first outstation I had become reconciled to the fact that this was not to be so.

Sibu was, and still is, the headquarters of the biggest province in Sarawak and is set on the banks of the Rejang River. We approached Sibu in the mists of the early morning and all around us were wastes of water and swirling wisps of vapour. It is low country just there and the old fort (demolished in 1936 to make way for the new Government offices and Residency) suddenly emerged out of the mist, standing white and firm on the very edge of the river bank.

When we came alongside, I saw my first Dayaks. They said in Sarawak that whenever you land, the first person you met was a "mouldy"; which, I regret to say, was the then popular term for this fine race. In this case, the saying was quite true, as the officer who was supposed to meet me was still in bed.

An unfortunate episode then occurred and to this day I blush. The Resident,* I was told, was out riding and if I strolled along a certain grass road, I should be sure

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* The Resident at that time was J. Baring-Gould, the son of S. Baring-Gould, the co-author with C. A. Bampfylde of *A History of Sarawak Under Its Two White Rajahs 1839-1908*, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1989, originally published in 1909 by Henry Sotheran of London.

to meet him. Eager to report myself, I did so and at the second bend or so met a rider-less pony, stirrups and reins flying, galloping towards me. Rounding the next bend, I met a rather thickset man walking towards me with obvious mud stains on his breeches. What did I do? Yes. I did. I went up, held out my hand and stuttered "Good morning, Sir, been riding I presume?"

However I spent many happy months in Sibu and began to learn what Sarawak was really like.

The cadet in Sibu was quite the odd job man - make no mistake about it. I sold stamps over the counter: I dosed sick Dayaks from the medicine cupboard; I drilled the Rangers; I undertook ambitious amateur engineering feats in the way of buildings and road-making and I lent the very junior Government servants very small sums of money out of my own pocket. This last, it seemed, was the privilege of the cadet and resulted in minor loss as nobody every repaid their loan.

In addition to the Government officers there were two sets of missionaries.

What fun we had in Sibu in those days. The Resident was a west countryman (the son of a well-known writer and author of "Onward Christian Soldiers") and managed his vast territory in much the same way as he did his Manor at Lew Trenchard.

There was no telephone and only one steam launch. Mostly we travelled in boats. In Sibu itself the best conveyance was a pony and I remember the arrival of the first bicycle. In the Resident's office was the only typewriter and the office still used those, I think they called them, "press copy machines", by which letters written in copying ink could be duplicated, so long as the whole thing did not turn out a sodden pulpy mess.

Dayak Friends

I learnt to entertain Dayaks in my quarters. As I lived in the Fort, which by the way had withstood a real attack by Dayaks in 1870, these visits were numerous. I also received calls from the nearby village of Melanaus (of whom more later) and learnt thereby much slang which has been most useful in my subsequent career.

It was not all play, however, and I was initiated into the mysteries of the Debtors' Court. Imprisonment for debt was in force but prison life was not very harsh. One I can vouch for was the prisoner who had been given what was more or less week-end leave. Arriving back rather late on one Sunday evening he found himself locked out. The gaoler said "No - people who are late deserve to be locked out". Whereupon the wretched man sat upon the steps of the gaol and made the night hideous with his lamentations. A kind District Officer ordered that he should be admitted.

Although things were not wild, there were episodes which might well startle the present day junior Administrative Officer. For instance, I was in my office one

afternoon and to be quite truthful half asleep. A Dayak stepped in and deposited a dirty looking bundle on my table. He appeared to want me to open it and in our language difficulties I motioned to him to do so. He did and out rolled a revolting looking head, not very old and decidedly smelly. No, he had not taken it. He had picked it up when following a party which had been on the warpath. I wrapped it up again gingerly and carried it to the Resident. He was not at all excited about it, merely remarking that I had better get the Corporal to smoke it over the prison kitchen fire so as to get rid of the smell.

So many people ask what the cost of living was in those days. Well, here are the figures. Food $35 a month, whisky 85 cents a bottle, square-face gin 50 cents a bottle, a house "boy" $8, and a good Chinese cook $12 a month. In the Sarawak Club we only paid for the soda water at ten cents a bottle - the gin was supplied free. As a cadet my pay was $100 p.m.

III

The Melanaus

On each of the four sides of the Charles Brooke Memorial in Kuching there is a plaque depicting what one can only suppose is a typical figure of the races which have played the most important part in the State of Sarawak since the beginning of Brooke rule, These are Malay, Dayak, Chinese and Kayan. Now, everyone is entitled to his own opinion, and no doubt the artist who designed this dignified and modest memorial was told what he had to do; and one presumes that the best advice was obtained. Nevertheless, it seems to me that one race was entirely forgotten when the selection was made.

And now, dear reader, do not get alarmed as I am not going to write a learned article on the Melanau race. I think, however, that a few random notes on the Melanau may interest you.

Along at least one hundred and fifty miles of the Sarawak coast there lives a race called Melanau, who numbered getting on for one hundred thousand persons. Both these statements will probably be contradicted by the Secretariat and by the last Census of Population (1947) but I refuse to budge an inch. My spelling of their name is exactly as it is pronounced by the people themselves, whilst the official spelling (Milanu) is not. I hold, therefore, that my spelling is right.

With regard to the population, large numbers of people who are classified as Malays are without a shadow of doubt Melanau. In a learned Government publication some years ago the author seemed to think that the absorption of the Melanaus by the Malays was only a matter of a few years.

The Melanaus, unlike the Dayaks, are aborigines of Sarawak and their language has little relation to the Malay and Dayak languages.

Most famous of all Melanau ceremonies is the *Beraiyun* one, when the *Berbayoh* (religious) incantation is used. This is a mysterious performance and the people are reluctant to discuss if it is, of course, the world wide ceremony of exorcising the devil but I only have an incomplete idea of what happens.

Now and again they build a gigantic swing - it is an awe inspiring sight and one has to climb up onto a ladder to get on it. Away you go, launched into the air, and mind you hold tight. It has some tribal significance, probably religious, but what I could not discover.

Some of the Melanau gods or semi-gods, were extraordinary fellows. My good friend the late Father Mulder, who knew more about these people than most, used to tell fascinating stories of these worthies. For instance, there was the famous chief in the olden days whose strength was colossal. In the Retus River, they say, the remains of his house may still be seen by those who know where to look. The posts were so big that it took ten men with arms outspread to encircle one. Alas! I have searched in vain for the Melanau Tintagel.

Naturally there are numerous theories about the origin of these people. One experienced traveller concluded that the beauty and colouring of the girls clearly showed that they were of Italian extraction.

Although slavery has not been recognised by Government since 1886, traces of it still survived when I was stationed in the district. One of my first jobs was to collect and return to the Government Printing Office numbers of old books of slave freedom certificates bound in books of fifty each.

In Oya in 1912, two young Melanau girls used to pass my bungalow every day on their way from the village to the bazaar. Neither of them ever wore a coat or any upper garment, fastening their sarongs above their breasts. Oddly enough too both always wore their hair long hanging down their back. They never had their heads covered, and in a place where people were one hundred per cent Mohamedan.

I was inquisitive enough to find out that these girls were slaves, if not in law, in fact, of a local *Pengiran* (Brunei: Prince). Either from choice or for other reasons, they were I suppose the last female slaves to follow the old strict rules of dress worn by that class. Eventually they both married into a superior class and automatically obtained their freedom.

On the ceremonial marriage bed you may know the rank of the couple by the number of piled up pillows - this is reckoned in pikuls (no relation to the commercial pikul of 113 lbs), and I believe that nine piccolos is the highest. One pikul would denote slave class: I have never seen this exposed.

Mohammedans, as you know, usually take an oath on the Koran. Pagan Melanaus cut a dog in half. I have seen this revolting sight several times. Muslim, Pagan or Christian, the Melanau exhibits a tolerance towards other creeds, which sets some of us a shining example.

I see that I have been rather dictatorial about the spelling of the word Melanau. As a matter of fact the correct word should be "Lemanau". It is said that the spelling of the word "Melanau" is a hundred year old mistake. Apparently an old writer had such an illegible hand that the mistake occurred and has never been put right. In any case, the name as applying to the whole race is merely a modern idea. It is not used by the people themselves except when dealing with Government Officials and Chinese.

The Melanaus have not the ultra-polite manners of the Malay nor the gushing friendliness of the Dayak. They are usually shy and suspicious of strangers and re-act slowly to new ideas. They have been called cowardly by some yet I have never seen any of them afraid of the most fearsome seas and dangerous river bars. They are great philanderers, yet they adore their children. They are improvident yet magnificently generous and exceed all others in Sarawak as sailors, fishermen and boat-builders. Again and again they have beaten all-comers at paddling and they seem to be the only people who can work the great sago areas with any success.

They are a peaceable lot and a dozen policemen are sufficient for a district the size of an English county. The people do not often go in for serious crime and the few prisoners are generally those who live and loved too well and cannot pay the fines.

When I think, however, of the fishing fleet returning to the Port of Mukah on the evening breeze, vessel after vessel sailing gaily over the bar, their sails silhouetted against the setting sun; when I walked through the great kampong (village) of Jemorong with its remains of the ancient high houses, relics of the marauding Dayak days; when I paddled up the Teliah River and I sailed past the great boat-building village of Igan or the charming village of Seduan and saw the people playing on one of their giant swings (and mind you, Seduan is only a mile and a half from Sibu); when I saw so many parts of the State, I do wonder why, when the Rajah Brooke Memorial was designed, a place, however humble, was not kept for this lovable people.

IV

Life in the Outstations

In 1912, as I explained earlier, Rajah Brooke selected his European Officers more or less on family lines - that is to say most of those who came out to Sarawak were related to those who had served earlier.

For many years the West Country of England was the recruiting place for most of the officers and so unlike other parts of the East, Scotsmen were rare. In this way the Sarawak Civil Service gained a bit of reputation and other Administrators in Malaya wondered how it was done. I think the answer was that since 1841, when Brooke rule started, the system of the Rajahs was in fact one of benevolent autocracy.

Certainly the Rajah (who really made Sarawak what it is) never liked the ways of the Colonial Office.

He had his own ideas of how the people should be ruled and he gave his officers, especially the outstation ones, a great deal of rope.

It must be remembered that communications were worse than they are now and the Rajah was quite right to allow his officers to settle things on the spot rather than let disputes and punishments hang over peoples' heads.

Years later a Chief Justice spoke in stern words about capricious justice and no doubt he was right.

It is the fashion to be amusing at the rather irregular procedure and methods of the second Rajah's Civil Service.

The Rajah himself was no stickler for red tape and ruled by a system particularly his own. His officers, therefore, grew up on the same model and it is also not be wondered that some of them, seldom seeing other Europeans, developed strange ways and peculiarities.

The stories of their idiosyncrasies are legion. There was the gentleman who rode a particularly small pony every morning but never without putting on correct riding kit. There was the real true blue conservative who opened his daily paper every morning at breakfast - that it was many weeks old did not trouble him, and no one dare touch the others in their wrappers - one each day. There was the disciplinarian who gravely fined the local Boxer (the shop in each outstation which stocked some European food and drink was always known as the Boxer; why I cannot say) for running out of soda water and again for running out of whiskey. There was a sportsman so keen on shooting that any rumour of pig or deer in the vicinity of the station meant an adjournment for the whole staff and a scramble for guns.

This sounds as if little or no work was done. Emphatically this was not so. Long and uncomfortable trips up-river - down-river - overland and by sea were the ever recurring duties of the outstation officer.

He spent long over his tours. Long distances were covered in boats paddled and poled up and down rivers, and in sailing craft battling against head winds and no winds at all. It is not surprising that those officers got to know the customs and languages intimately and, what is very important, learnt to have patience. For all this so called idyllic existence, outstation life was often monotonous, uncomfortable and lonely.

In the smaller stations one seldom got meat. The slaughter of an old cow from the Government herd or any of the rare buffaloes, was an event. By customary right, the District Officer was offered the pick of the beast. I remember that the tail was highly prized. There was, of course, no ice and one's share was limited to what would not go rotten.

In an up-river place there was little fish. In fact, one lived mainly on tough little fowls, miniature eggs and what the "Boxer" stocked.

The delicacies which all "Boxers" seemed to have were herrings in tomato sauce, asparagus, bully beef, cod's roe, beetroot and pork and beans.

Amusements were few. In the season we could shoot snipe and pigeon. There was occasional deer and pig to shoot or hunt, but if people have the idea that the jungle is teeming with big game they are wrong.

Outstation life on the coast had many attractions, although sailing up and down the coast soon revealed those who were not good sailors. Motor launches may be handy but sailing in a fast *bandong* had its charms. All the world over sailors whistle for a wind and I have time and time looked over the sea at dawn, just when the waters are changing from indigo to a pellucid green, and chanted with the crew:-

Tua tua keladi
Makin lama, makin jadi[*]

Why exactly this rhyme (which is nearly untranslatable) should bring the wind, I do not know: but it did and the gentle south wind, which had died away with the dawn came up to blow again.

I know of few things so thrilling as crossing the bar at Mukah or at Oya in a Melanau fishing boat when the north east Monsoon is blowing. The crew row out to the mouth of the river with their clumsy oars in fine style. The roar of the breakers gets louder and louder; as far as one can see there is breaking water and the thud of tumbling seas. Out we go steering for one place where we hope to slip through. Crash!! - comes the first one over us. The vessel stands on its head and then on its tail. The gear is all awash and the passengers cower in the swirling water which half fills the boat. High up in the stern the steersmen clutch at the rudder and keep her head on. A blinding sheet of spray covers us but we keep head on. Foot by foot we dodge the rollers and amidst cheers and laughter emerge into quieter waters. A marvellous experience but not to everybody's liking.

Fishing with a seine net was our Sunday morning occupation. All sorts of fish came into the net. Sometimes a small crocodile or sting ray and heaps of little fish which blow up like a balloon when you rub them.

For all this, it was a lonely life and left one dependent on one's own resources.

It used to be said that directly a man planted tomatoes he was moved. In my case it was almost true. I seemed to be constantly on the move. The second Rajah was one of those "pack up thy bed and walk" persons and the junior officers always kept an eye open for a sudden call.

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[*] Literally 'Old old yam, the older you get the more able you become' but inferring increasing sexual interest or prowess as the person matures.

When I moved from Sibu to Oya the Rajah arrived in his yacht at noon and I sailed with him on transfer at five the next morning.

Travelling by long boat up and down the rivers has charm which is practically non existent in a motor launch. It is slow, but, anyway, what is the hurry? Surely it was no great hardship to lie at full length on a mattress with plenty of books and snooze at intervals to the rhythmic plomp of the paddles. Hour after hour the crew will paddle on and they never seem to tire. Now and again one of them will break into a song and the rest will join in, keeping time to the tune. A real boating song and one never to forget is

Lanang, belado, lanang
Lanang kaki dulang mulai
Bukan mabok pinang
Lanang mabok anak orang!

Which might be interpreted as a very sentimental love song.*

When the river is too shallow for paddling then you pole. But all this is nothing to shooting the rapids. Frankly, sometimes it frightened me.

Contrary to expectations you do not see dozens of crocodiles. Now and again one of the crew will point out what looks like a log lying on the glistening muddy bank which sometimes with a sudden movement and swirl slips into the river with remarkable speed. Crocodiles are difficult to shoot. It has to be a big calibre bullet and you have to hit it in the right place.

The Malays and the Melanaus have a peculiar way of netting deer. They use a long net made of rattan with which they entrap the deer and drive them into it with dogs. When the deer charges the net most of the natives discharge their fire-arms some of them ancient weapons which fire bits of lead and old nails while others rush around with spears and knives and a good time is had by all.

I was once walking across a clearing between two clumps of jungle. A few lone trees were standing and a bush or two. Quite suddenly I became aware of a man walking with me, perhaps ten yards away. A little gnarled old man, it appeared to me, hobbling along with a stick. Now believe this or not, that old man was an *orang utan*!! I know that such things generally happen to someone else and never to oneself. Rather alarmed I watched him out of the corner of my eye. I was ashamed to retreat and too frightened to stop. We walked together as far as the clump of trees when he quickly disappeared into the shadows of the trees. One night I went to a very well-celebrated wedding at the big Melanau house at Kampong Nangka, near Sibu. The

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* This may be translated as:
Swim, fish, swim,
Swim and bring your tray of treasures.
His faraway look does not come from betel
But from longing to be with a certain young maiden.

house was forty feet from the ground. Packed in one of the rooms, the floor suddenly gave way. Down we all went but marvellous to relate left the happy couple sitting on the bridal bed just on the verge of the abyss. One old woman was killed and a few others injured.

V

Race Week

The great event of the year in Kuching was a race week. Sometimes there were two a year, but only one, the Summer one, was looked upon as the real thing, and to it came as many outstation men as could be spared. In a way it was a very wise move on the Rajah's part to allow these big meetings. Not only were Government Officials, both Native and European, given an opportunity of meeting each other and exchanging unofficial ideas regarding their respective districts, but official and very serious conferences were arranged.

Apart from this, however, the main idea was a holiday and a chance, so the outstationers said, to wake up the Kuching-ites. Race-week was rather Irishy at times as there were not always races. For some years racing stopped, but from 1922 until the war, racing was the big event of the week.

They say the first things the English do when they start a new country are build a church, a race course and golf links, but when two or three Englishmen are gathered together and a few horses and ponies the result is invariably a local Turf Club.

Horses were practically unknown in Sarawak until after the arrival of Rajah James Brooke but, gradually, ponies were imported and it is clear that sometime in the eighteen eighties racing was firmly established in Kuching.*

The older generation of Europeans were keener on racing than they are these days. There were few Asian jockeys and Residents, Borneo Company managers and Commandants of the Sarawak Rangers put on butcher's boots and silk jackets and belted their mounts round in high spirits. The Second Rajah himself rode at least once at each meeting.

The ponies used were all kinds, Sabah, Deli, Arab, Australian Whaler, Sulu and animals of apparently enthusiastic but ill-considered parents. Attempts were made to classify these but I believe that 14.2 Whalers and 11.3 Delis have been known to run together. They ranged from 15 hands down to 13.3, but an average was 14.2.

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* James Brooke was publicly installed as Rajah of Sarawak on 24 September 1841.

In 1922, for the first time in many years, a big batch of Borneo ponies arrived in Kuching, and in 1923, the old rather loosely-knit "Sarawak Races Committee" was merged into a full-blown Sarawak Turf Club.

The greatest draw, however, was the unlimited sweep on one race on the last day of the meeting. It had been known to reach $50,000. Once the first prize was won by a little unknown girl in Sebuyau, another time by a Kheh coolie. Large prizes have also been won by, for instance, a miserly old teetotal European, a very superior sort of Government Officer who looked down on racing as common, and a jolly old Chinese shopkeeper who built a "folly" to mark his good luck. People laughed at him, but I did not. Every morning when he got up he looked at his "folly" and had a good laugh at the eccentricities and caprices of that jade fortune.

We raced in proper colours. As secretary I once had to register "old rose, rolled gold sleeves, ditto cap".

In one respect we differed from all other courses. From time immemorial the Kuching Malays have had the right to build scores of small huts on each side of the straight for the accommodation of their women-folk.

Attempts first to dislodge them, and later to charge rent completely failed. The arrival and departure of hundreds of fascinatingly dressed Malay women was worth seeing, and after all the course was free to all except the stand. We were a democratic club in those days. Long may it remain so.

Racing was not the only attraction of the week. There was the ball given by the bachelors at the Sarawak Club (now the Chief Justice's Residence). Once a certain gentleman and I were detailed to take care of the drinks. We knew the ladies liked their "cups"; so we decided to make a hock cup. Large basins were ready and into them we poured hock, soda water, champagne, brandy, liqueur and angostura.

In the language of today the husbands took a dim view of the matter. After the first dance the bachelors began ladling out the "cup". My word, how the girls lapped it up, and it was not long before some of them had "had it". Some got playful, some charmingly incoherent and some simply gave a contented sigh and with a seraphic smile passed gracefully out.

Now and again there was a fancy dress ball at the Astana. Ingenuity in thinking out and making fancy dresses will never cease, but I remember two cases in which realism to do the thing properly overcame prudence. One gentleman, desiring to go as a Dayak, had himself painted all over with iodine. The result of course was a bed in the hospital. The other was the case in which the guest insisted on going as a Negro - he spent days in experimenting with dyes and pigments until he thought he had the right mixture. It certainly was a triumph of make up but it did not please his little wife at all. For days afterwards suspicious smears disfigured her face. The would-be Negro was eventually given a few days leave to become a pale-face again.

The highlight of one race week was a bullock race. These animals, like the buffalo dislike the smell of a European and it took some horsemanship to sit on the brutes

with neither bridle nor saddle, but merely a rope attached to its nose. Riders who had secretly learnt Tamil words to urge their mounts on were eventually discovered and penalised by having to give the others a start.

Cricket was played occasionally - Kuching versus Outstations. We played sometimes near the female lunatic asylum. On one occasion I was fielding in very close proximity to the railings. An unfortunate young woman, and more unfortunate still that she talked English, insisted on bombarding me with exceedingly obscene language and gestures. My attempts to stop her only urged her to language undreamed of, I am sure, by the ladies who watched us from the grandstand.

In race week, football and rugby were played if sides could be persuaded to turn out. I am no rugger player and I am sure that it is a good game but not after a very heavy curry tiffin and a session at the club.

Until somewhere around the very early twenties dancing was a serious pastime. White gloves for both performers, programmes and not more than three dances with one lady. Reversing was permitted if not done too frequently, no gliding and certainly no pump handle business. Then the war came and abandon. Every man out from leave had a new step, How well I remember the craze that overcame Kuching - the tunes of "Avalon", "I Ain't Nobody's Darling" and "Swanee". No more gloves, we grasped our partners bare backs with sweaty hands; no more programmes; you either danced the whole evening with the same girl and did not have to marry her afterwards, or just collared anyone you saw.

And so race weeks ended and outstationers set out for their districts again encumbered with a lot of useful stores and odds and ends, always including a ham which was looked upon as the sign of a return from the metropolis. I do not expect these meetings will ever occur again - at least not in the old style. Despite the rather reckless air of our old race weeks and the spirit of the devil-may-care, much of the coming policy and attitude for the next six months was thoroughly chewed up and digested. Perhaps the liquor loosened our tongues and sorted out our repressions. Many a feud was patched up, many a misunderstanding put right; much paper and temper was saved. So back to our outstations to ponder over our debts, our gains, our defeats and our triumphs.

VI

More About Outstation Life

Life in an outstation before the days of so much office work was full of small incidents. One got up very early as there were prisoners to be put to work and soldiers to drill: and a tour round carpenters' sheds, boat sheds, cowsheds, and the like. A pony was a useful thing to have if there were any roads or bridges. Bicycles were very rare and seldom stood up to the rough going for long and I remember the agony of

riding when the pedals would not become unstuck or when the chain broke every half mile. If one had no other way, one walked.

At eight, one breakfasted. If near the coast the eggs had a strong flavour of sago or prawns and if there was no bread we had those very hard "cabin" biscuits. After that it was off to the office. Here one interviewed people with strange requests and long-winded complaints - matters of debt, of old family feuds, of love, hate, malice and all uncharitableness. On very young shoulders was placed enough responsibility to break them. It was not good to take it all too seriously but it was imperative that you should listen and no one else. The people may have disliked your advice and your commands; they may have laughed at them but they knew they had the right to your attention. One learnt a lot in this way and I like to think that not all my interviewers went away disgruntled or ungrateful.

When the first onslaught was over one went into Court. Before Chief Justices and Attorney Generals invaded us this was often a gay proceeding. Criminal and civil cases were heard together and a good complicated land dispute or a real naughty case brought crowds of interested spectators. One sat with a Malay Native Officer or two, and any Chiefs who happened to be there. They were supposed to help you, and sometimes they did, but the ultimate decision depended on yourself.

I am told by the legal men today that the minutes of some those old cases make strange and disquieting reading. It is true that "fined $5 for trifling with the time of the Court": "to stand on a form until the Court rises for spitting on the floor": and so on, do shock lawyers. It must be remembered, however, that staffs were small and time was short. Nevertheless, I think that on the whole justice was done, and what was important, it was done quickly and cheaply.

The people rather liked coming to Court. It was held with very little pomp and much friendliness. One thing which is missing nowadays are the Policemen sitting in a row behind the principals - these were always armed with native swords, with colourful corded belts and the senior N.C.O., similarly armed sat behind the magistrate. This, they say, became the practice after an attempt many years before to attack the magistrate who was run round the Bench by an aggrieved suitor.

I was sent alone into Court before I knew much Malay. My first Resident said "never explain - pass sentence or give your decision". I hardly think that this is quite right but long and learned judgements do not always reach the persons to whom they are addressed.

There is the story of the Justice in Kuching who delivered a death sentence of unusual length upon a Chinese. He had no knowledge of anything but English and at the end said to the interpreter, "Tell the prisoner what the learned judge has said". The interpreter turned to the unfortunate man and said in a loud voice, "Lu mati!!", which may be interpreted as "You die!!"

Anyway, enough of Courts for a while. By this time another batch of people had turned up to see the District Officer and so to lunch and into the office again. Then there was land to examine, the station to inspect and the really only unpleasant part

of one's work, that of receiving the Government monies taken in during the day and seeing that expenditure had been properly accounted for. I know that my station accounts never did agree although my clerk and I used to work for hours over the wretched figures. If there was a surplus in the cash the auditor took it: if there was a deficit you paid up.

In those days there were very few notes and our cash was in big silver dollars and boxes and boxes of copper cents. After a bad flood once in Sibu, I spent three days counting and bundling up fifty thousand dollars in copper - I think this would be about five million coins. In the outstations we received our pay in good, solid silver dollars, a very gratifying sensation which the possessors of greasy notes do not now experience.

There was no bank in Kuching, except one run by Government for its officers, which was in the Treasury. The story that each officer with an account had his own pigeon hole, and that money was changed round from hole to hole as the cheques came in is probably untrue but it was the popular story in those days.

Moving money was rather a problem since the copper was packed in boxes of fifty dollars. I cannot remember its weight but it was as much as a man could lift. Sometimes a box or two was spilt into the river and there it would remain for all time. Now and again the money was stolen and the boxes filled with sand by unscrupulous persons.

You might have thought that after all this the outstation officer would have had the evening to himself. More often, however, he had callers at his bungalow - Dayaks, downriver for a spell, drifted in to talk; they love talking and are most sociable people. It is hard to convince them that one is not always in the mood for conversation - they appreciate a drink and a smoke and one kept a bottle of "Square Face" gin (price 50 cents in those days) or some brand of arrack (local made spirits) for these visitors; and handed round little quids of Java tobacco. The talk was a repetition of the requests and complaints in the office but in a friendlier fashion; a drink or two oils the machinery.

Malay, Chinese - all came up from time to time and the highlight was when voluble old Malay ladies arrived and brought with them (just to give them a chance to see things) a bevy of charming young damsels, all very shy and peering over the tops of their veils.

It was not, as you see, a wildly exciting life, but it was a satisfactory one. Ambition, however small, could be realised. Those big districts reminded one so much of England, although they were so different in many ways. The District Officer was very much the "all powerful". When the change came many years later many of us felt that life was not worth living. Of course, we got over it, but those years have tinged the whole of my life and as compensation have provided me with delightful memories, some of which I hope will be reflected later on in this book.

VII

Head-Hunting

It is about time we started on head hunting since no book on Sarawak would be complete without it.

Most of the tribes have given it up (1946) but the Ibans never really have stopped the practice. Many generations of harassed outstation officers have spent weary days in tramping around the country and exhorting them to be good.

From time to time, until only about 30 years ago, "expeditions" were despatched to punish the evil doers. It was never my good fortune to accompany one of these. Always, I was the unlucky one who was left at the base to speed up supplies and boats and reinforcements. Not that there was much chance of military glory but mainly hard work with the enemy always out of reach.

The Government force was usually made up of friendly tribes which could be classified as irregulars, and very irregular they were too. Most of them were out for loot and I regret were not interested in the fighting.

The main part of the force was always a detachment of the Sarawak Rangers. This force was raised in 1862 and was composed of various races but principally Dayaks. For some years, however, there was a strong contingent of Sepoys recruited from India. The first Commandant was Major Rodway, an old Connaught Ranger who left his mark on the force including the "Irish Washer-woman" regimental march. Succeeding Commandants also had their own ideas.

It is difficult to know how to regard head hunting. The law rightly says that it is murder but the Dayaks have never thought it so. The strange thing about it all is that there does not seem to be any bravery about it. Apparently any head will do - a woman, a child or an old man. However, it was dying out even in those days and but for the war with Japan it might have died out altogether.

The Dayaks have a very complete system of laws or what we might term customary laws. What is overlooked in the European social code is punished, and well punished too by the Dayaks. For instance' "petting", "necking", or anything of that nature incurs a sharp fine and is called by a very appropriate name.

The best time to visit a long-house is when a *begawai* feast is on. This takes place after the gathering of the rice harvest. The Dayak does not usually drink but on occasions like this he lets himself go. The main festivities take place at night on the great communal verandah of the long-house. The drink is the local *tuak*, made from fermented rice, but now and again the people add to it Chinese *arrack* (spirits). In any case everybody gets very drunk and the scene the next morning is not pleasant with rows of sick men trying to get rid of their potions of the night before.

The Dayak when offered European drink always likes it neat and has a remarkable stomach. Even castor oil goes down well.

The Chinese

When I first came to Sarawak the Chinese had just cut off their pig-tails. I was lucky to see the last of these handsome ornaments as ornamental they were, and great care was lavished upon them by their owners.

Perhaps the most amazing thing about the Chinese is the emancipation of the women which took place during my last few years in the service. In my early days the only Chinese women one saw were of the peasant class carrying produce (and not the young ones at that) or elderly wives who now and again came out to shake hands with their husbands' customers.

It is true that one day a year, *Chap Goh Meh*, the young girls made a solemn procession round the illuminated streets, but they were guarded safely by parents and chaperones. This was the only chance the young men had of seeing the girls at all.

As I have said before, the European shop in an outstation Bazaar was known as the "Boxer" (a name probably given following the Boxer Rebellion in China) whose owner was often head of the community as well. He was indeed a guide, philosopher and friend to young hard-up officers. They always got paid in the end but many a District Officer has had to thank the Boxer for assistance in getting home on leave. We paid our own fares with the help of a small grant and it was always a difficult question just how we would do it.

Nearly every Chinese Bazaar was an exact copy of each other except for the size. The days of plate glass windows, show cases and English speaking shop assistants had not arrived. In a small town you might get twenty or thirty of these shops all selling the same things but all receiving custom. The exceptions were the tinsmith, watchmaker, blacksmith and the coffee shop.

There is a sad story about one of these watchmakers or repairers. A mechanically minded cadet was sent to a station where for years a Chinese had carried on a profitable watch and clock shop. The trouble started when the policemen and other minor Government servants began to take their old watches to the cadet for repairs. Soon his fame spread and the public streamed up with odds and ends of mechanism which the cadet put right as a labour of love.

One day, a poor old Chinese came up to the Government Offices. In his hands he had a cardboard box full of wheels and springs and screws. "Here", he said, putting the box on the Cadet's table, "you might as well have these - you have taken all my custom. I am off."

Two important institutions were the spirit farm and the gambling farm.* These do not need explanation. I enjoyed seeing the Chinese gamble. They are splendid winners and losers. I knew one old man in Kuching who had one bet, and only one, each night. The game was *fantan* and he used to slip a $100 note under the little playing cards which proper gamblers use so that the banker cannot see what the bet is. He would then walk away. If he won, the banker would give him his winnings later; if he lost - well - there it was. Perfect trust and no signs of anxiety.

The spirit farm was where you could buy spirit and arrack and also drink on the premises. Somehow or other although there was a certain amount of drunkenness there was not as much as one would see in most bars.

The Kapitan China, the headman of a Bazaar was gradually losing his status. He had the right, and exercised it, of sitting on the Bench in Court. In most cases he wielded considerable influence and was a great help to the District Officer. The Chinese have a good reputation in Sarawak. In my time there has been little trouble although it is true that there were a number of gang robbers among the gold mine labourers in Upper Sarawak.

Once the biter was bit. It was the custom every month to take the pay of the labour force of a rubber estate by road from the Government Treasury at Bau. The money, which in those days consisted mostly of one cent copper coins, was carried in boxes slung between poles by labourers escorted by police and estate staff. One day the usual procession started and, when going through a very narrow defile cut through solid limestone, out darted the robbers and threw pepper in the faces of the party and the escort. Alas, the robbers broke open the cases only to find them full of cold storage meat and fruit. The poor fellows had picked the wrong day.

VIII

Ulu Troubles, Dayak Progress, Kuching

The expeditions sent against recalcitrant Dayaks before the last war were really very local affairs - little bands of young men who found life dreary and searched for excuses to become heroes and the objects of admiration of their women folk. They had a nuisance value but the safety and well-being of the whole State was never endangered by their outbursts.

During my time the only trouble which might possibly have upset the whole country was the trouble in the early 1930's, known as "the Asun affair". Asun was a dismissed Penghulu, which is a Dayak Chief. He was never an outstanding personality; in fact events proved that he was rather a silly old man of no great

* 'Farm' in this context means a monopoly granted by the government to a licensee.

eloquence and doubtful courage. Anyway, he certainly did cause Government a lot of trouble and expense but amazingly little bloodshed, either on his side or ours.

For nearly three years small Government parties wandered around trying to catch him - it was noticeable that any sufferings or loss sustained by his followers was borne by them and not by their so-called leader. In the end he surrendered and I received him in person at Simanggang. His appearance was not impressive - subservient and terrified for the safety of his life.

He had let down a number of better men. After his vainglorious exhortations the whole affair fizzled out and Asun became a comfortably-off political prisoner, content to live in comparative luxury on a Government he had reviled so often.

During these troubles the Skrang Dayaks kept on reporting that evilly disposed persons were nightly attacking their long-houses by throwing stones onto their roofs. Investigations failed to prove anything of the sort, but the stories continued and their district was gradually developing into a ferment. They demanded protection and hinted at the resurrection of old tribal feuds. It sounded too silly for words but when they began appearing with sample stones something drastic had to be done. Luckily a small Government party sleeping in one of their long-houses managed to keep sufficiently awake to find out what it was. Believe it or not, those Dayaks were throwing stones onto their own roofs - a policeman who let off a rifle at a shadow near the house and nearly shot one of the members of the house proved this.

Dayak Progress

It always sounded most snobbish to me when I used to hear people say that natives must be educated to European standards before they would be fit for self-government. I just wonder how we were so rash as to make such statements. The state of the world since 1914 has not been a good advertisement for our great educated civilisation.

Lately the Sea Dayaks (Ibans) seem very much to have woken up. For some time previous to the outbreak of war in the Far East they had been nibbling at what really amounted to the Chinese trade monopoly. Capital was forthcoming, educated Dayaks were available, energy and enthusiasm were abundant.

The guerilla operation in Sarawak during the war and the dropping of British Forces gave the Dayaks a chance to show what they could do. It proved to the Dayaks themselves that they were every bit as good as any of the other races in the country. Today they are finding their own Native Officers.

The Land Dayaks (Bidayuh) are also beginning to assert themselves. These people are getting tired of being under the Malay aristocracy in Kuching. Kayans, Kenyahs, Kelabits, Muruts, Punans and Bukits - and that is not the whole list - will, it is hoped, go forward with the help of Government.

Kuching

In Kuching there are three institutions so essential to the British, and these are the Churches, the Race Course, and the Golf Links.

I speak respectfully of the Churches as, the oldest, St. Thomas', was built in 1848. The big brick Roman Catholic Church of St. Joseph, although not so old, cost only the modest sum of $6,000 which, you must admit, was a remarkable achievement. There is a Chinese Temple, however, still standing on the river front which must be 200 years old. Rightly the Chinese venerate and look upon this as a symbol of their long residence in this country.

While on the subject, I wonder how many people know of the old Christian cemetery overlooking Bishopsgate Street. Here are buried many of the pioneers of modern Sarawak. For instance, there are the graves of Fox and Steele who were murdered at Kanowit in 1859. Here also lie Lee and Brereton. Their story is not generally known. On a punitive expedition up to Skrang River in 1853 Brereton accused his friend Lee of cowardice for refusing to advance up-river and attack the enemy. Lee who was in command, suspected that the Dayaks had prepared an ambush and did not wish to fall into the trap. One evening the two had a violent quarrel, and the next morning Lee, exasperated by his friend's taunts, ordered the advance. Exactly as Lee had foretold happened. The Government Forces were surrounded and outnumbered and Lee, up to his waist in water, met a valiant death defending himself with sword against foes all round him. Brereton escaped but, they say, never forgave himself for his share in the disaster and died a year later of dysentery. Alan Lee was one of my ancestors. I have tried many times to identify his head which has been hanging in some Dayak long-house in the Skrang as a trophy ever since.

Here too, lie four persons killed in the Insurrection of 1857, quite a number of Naval ratings, numbers of the first Rajah's staff and others of some or no great importance.

A word about the so-called "Chinese insurrection" of 1857. Although in most text books and histories this affair is always called by that name, the truth is that it was nothing but the activities of a secret society resulting in a gigantic gang robbery.

It was certainly not a general Chinese rebellion against the existing Government. The culprits were all from one district and did not represent the rest of the Chinese living in other parts of the State.

Admittedly great damage was done and there was grave loss of life but the whole affair was cleared up in six days, and the flight, slaughter or capture of the guilty Chinese was quick and determined.

The rest of the Chinese deplored the rash act of their countrymen and peace and safety soon settled down again.

The Museum, dating from 1881, is too well known to need my comments except to say that a chance discovery in a picture paper of a Town Hall somewhere in France prompted the second Rajah to build the rather peculiar type of building.

The Sarawak Government Railway was started not long after I arrived in 1912. It was a small affair, built to run ten miles or a bit further at some future date. It was the subject of much ribaldry, but I do not believe the story about an English firm turning down the contract and advising us to go to Gamages. The engine drivers were a friendly lot and would sometimes stop and pick up people waiting on the track. This line was later abandoned for public traffic but was used again by the Japanese. I have painful memories of being jammed into a crowded coal truck morning after morning and taken out to the airstrip to work there.

The first motor bus was a magnificent affair which looked rather like a pagoda on wheels. One had to get out going uphill and be quick lest it ran backwards on you. We hired it for the races and started off, coach horn and all. It left a trail of broken culverts behind and finished up by refusing to move at all.

I see I have forgotten to tell you how Kuching came to be called by that name. Well, frankly I do not know except that by a decree dated 1872, the old name of "Sarawak" for the town was changed to Kuching.

One thing I can tell you and that is the name has nothing to do with a cat. No race in Sarawak uses the word "Kuching" for cat. The Malays call the animal "pusa" which is, I suppose an onomatopoeic word. The Dayak word has an equally cat-like sound, and there is a Government Station called Pusa.

As a parting word I will tell you something rather extraordinary. The main entrance of the Rajah's Astana is the imposing and now ancient square tower overlooking the chief door to the Palace.

Now there is a Brooke tradition that the exterior of this tower must not be whitewashed or renovated. If this should occur, so runs the story, some disaster will take place. The ivy-like creeper was causing parts of the original moulding to crumble in venerable decay.

The Japanese, however, saw fit to put this deplorable bit of ruin into good order. Creepers were torn away, and masons, plasterers and whitewashers got busy. Now whether you call it coincidence or act of God or what you will, the truth is shortly afterwards a great local disaster occurred.* Its new owners, perhaps, had never heard of the legend and the violated tower fulfilled the story. The motto still remains carved above the main door, *HARAP-LAH SI'LAGI BERNAPAS.***

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* The local disaster occurred when Prince Maeda of Japan, who occupied the Astana, was killed three days later when his plane crashed into the sea off Bintulu

** The translation of the motto is 'While I breathe I hope'.

IX

Social Life

I think it was Somerset Maugham who said that Europeans in the Far East were snobbish. In the early days the Sarawak Club in Kuching was, I suppose, a bit so. For instance it was an understanding that no engineer stood a chance of being elected. (This decision was made in all European clubs in the Far East following a strike by ship's engineers in Singapore during the first world war when they were accused of indirectly depriving children of milk supplies). A ship's captain, perhaps, but not the other deck officers - mining engineers so long they did not call themselves engineers.

The club was really a dull place except in race week. The young members were not supposed to butt in. You could be stood a drink but not stand one - that is until you had ceased to be regarded as a new boy.

Golf was played at many places and on most extraoIrdinary courses. In Sibu we played among the kapok (Cotton) trees. In Mukah I regret to say we occasionally tee'd up on Chinese graves and I have often searched for my ball in an empty coffin.

The third Rajah liked having roulette parties at the Club, and used to give the most generous odds, I usually fought shy of these owing to the ferocious tactics of the ladies. In the end I had to give it up as the fair one alongside me inevitably swept my winnings and those of the man on the other side of her into her lap.

The Ladies' Club in Kuching was a most extraordinary affair. In those days our club was very masculine (rather in the style of the famous notice in the Jesselton Club, "No dogs or women admitted") and the very few women of Kuching had a club of their own.

Calling and leaving cards was an intricate business and a duty to be taken seriously. Attired in heavy blue serge suit, straw boater and black leather boots, one wandered about in a rickshaw leaving cards. I found it quite impossible to give any directions to the rickshaw puller. No puller had ever been known to understand any ordinary language and if you were not very careful you were wheeled into the most odd places and sometimes even deposited at a house of ill repute.

Another danger was when the man let the rickshaw run away with him down-hill - faster and faster you whirled along, the man's feet hardly touching the ground at all. At the moment you thought he was really going to take off and fly he threw the shafts up over his head and flung himself into the ditch. Well, over you went out of the back of the rickshaw and the next morning the puller would present you with a bill - one pair of new shafts, repairs to the hood, one new lamp and five dollars for injuries to himself.

No European woman would stir out of the house between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. without something on her head which she thought was absolutely

sunproof. The stupendous sun helmets looked like giant mushrooms draped with a veil to hang down behind.

Even at smart garden parties the hats were very much hats, covered in flowers and cherries and the plumage of resplendent birds. No legs were uncovered, no bare arms. The sun was a powerful destroyer and the bogey of sunstroke was ever before their eyes.

For men the tunic coat was the general wear and I wonder why it has gone out of fashion.

In time, however, and especially after the World War 1 our clothes did become easier. Nevertheless on occasions, for instance at the local races or at an Astana garden party, the ladies turned out in incredible elaborate frocks, wobbly hats, tight gloves and even tighter shoes.

End of an era

Rajah Sir Charles Brooke died in 1917. On a much smaller scale it may be compared with the death of Queen Victoria. The second Rajah had reigned for so long (49 years) that the oldest European in his service had not been born when he began his rule.

The Rajah died in England and was buried there. Tradition says that he had wished to be buried in Sarawak on the top of the hill overlooking his old station at Simanggang.

This had been his old stamping ground, when as a young man he contended with troublesome Dayaks. There was an old seat on the top of the hill where the old man used to sit on his visits to Simanggang many years later. The view of the distant mountains is superb; here one has the real Sarawak.

They say that he haunts Fort Alice, the old Fort nearby. Sentries have insisted that they heard his footsteps as he walked around his quarters in the Fort.

People said that Sarawak would never be the same again. Well, of course it wouldn't - it never is - but that does not necessarily mean that it would be for the worse. No one will deny to Charles Brooke great tenacity and real courage but the fact is that he had outgrown his times - his Sarawak was in danger of being an anachronism.

It is hardly necessary to stress what an international figure he was. He had made the Sarawak of James Brooke, then only a story book for boys, into a country well worth the notice of His Majesty's Government.

Charles Vyner Brooke had a difficult task in succeeding his father. He had of course been working in Sarawak ever since he came down from Cambridge. He had served as a Cadet and later as an outstation Resident.

The new Rajah had all his father's distinctive appearance and not a few of his little habits. It was not surprising however, to see an alteration in the old regime. The old Rajah was a martinet; the new Rajah was not. In many ways things became easier for us officers. For instance the awful business of putting on tails for Astana parties was abolished. Then the Victorian Astana musical evenings came to an end. The one light part of the evenings was the one and only humorous song which the old Rajah allowed - the performer was an ex-naval Petty Officer, and year after year sang his old song, "Beer, beer, beautiful beer".

It was no longer necessary for European ladies to attend Band Evenings in the public gardens in Kuching (now the Central Padang). The wagonette and pair disappeared; the seasick Dayak soldiers were removed from the Royal Yacht.

The installation of the new Rajah was a magnificent show. The great spectacle was the guard of honour of one hundred Dayaks dressed in all their war paint. I took fifty of them back with me to Sibu - the sea is no respecter of persons and lo, how the mighty fell. The next morning as we entered the quiet waters of the Rejang, the Malay captain turned the hoses on them - there was no other way of cleaning up the mess.

It is queer the way people regard dress. Some years ago a party of Sarawak Dayaks were arrested by the Singapore police for going about improperly dressed. Luckily there was a Sarawak man over there at the time but it took quite a bit of time to explain to a scandalised Inspector that a loin cloth tastefully ornamented and fringed was not indecent. Nowadays, of course, with what one sees of the girls at the Swimming Club, those Dayaks would be regarded as grossly over-dressed.

At Queen Victoria's Jubilee, Dayak police marched in the procession. They were accommodated with the Scots Guards in Chelsea barracks and were, I am told, a great success with the nursemaids in those parts.

In spite of some innovations, Charles Brooke's Sarawak continued for some years after his death. There were still officers who obstinately combated any change. In a way they were quite right. Simply it amounted to this - that brought up as they were in the old Rajah's ways they were incapable of learning new tricks.

Rather like the Chinese when they cut off their queues, the Malays and the Dayaks began to sit up and take notice. It was high time too; the days of Bampfylde, Deshon, Bailey, Ricketts, Hose, Baring-Gould and other notables had gone. Their autocratic and benevolent rule would not work these days. Their work however, had not been in vain. Labour troubles and other matters disrupted Malaya and the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). Sarawak stood firm and Vyner Brooke inherited a loyal, a steady and a contented people.

There was the great rice shortage of 1921 and slump after slump. With great sagacity the new Rajah steered his country through those troublesome times.

The only physical violence I can remember was when the Resident of Sibu and myself were stoned by angry Foochow women who demanded more rice for their

many children. I, too, was the unfortunate person who literally held the baby when a despairing Foochow girl deposited her baby on my office desk and said, "Here you are - feed it yourself" and vanished. An awkward position for a shy bachelor, you will admit.

X

I Became a Resident

It is a great day when one gets one's first important job. Early in 1930 I was promoted and appointed Resident, Second Division, the very home and origin of the Sea Dayaks; and where Charles Brooke spent so many years of his life. Here too, the Skrang Dayaks took the head of my ancestor, Mr. Alan Lee; and here too is Fort Alice which is said to be haunted by the second Rajah.

It is a Division saturated with custom. For instance every night at eight o'clock, the sentry at Fort Alice shouts out a Dayak call (recently stopped).* He has been doing this probably from the time the Fort was first erected in 1864. The gist of it is; "eight o'clock had sounded, the drawbridge is up and none may come up to the Fort". That there is no drawbridge, and the door is not locked makes no difference.

Rajah Vyner Brooke had a great affection for this Division and was rightly jealous of any innovations which had not his approval. There was a special kind of loyalty in this Division, and I remember on one of the Rajah's visits an entirely unofficial guard of honour of pensioned Sarawak Rangers paraded on the road leading up to the Astana at Simanggang. There they were, about a dozen old men, all wearing medals, and armed with an assortment of fire arms including old muskets, muzzle loading shot guns and a kind of blunderbuss. The very old ex-sergeant called out the commands and the incredible line of shaky old men bravely stuck out their withered chests and saluted their Rajah.

Too soon my stay in this delectable Division came to an end. My new job was to be Resident of the very much bigger Fourth Division with headquarters at the oil town of Miri. In those days the European population of Miri was bigger than that of Kuching, the Capital. When a big oil company sets itself out to do things it does them well.

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* Possibly the custom was re-instated as the call was being made as late as 1951. The call was, according to a personal communication from O. F. Wright:

Oh ha! Oh ha! Oh ha!	(Oh ha! Oh ha! Oh ha!)
Jam diatu pukul lapan	(The time is now eight o'clock)
Tangga udah di tarit	(The steps have been drawn up)
Pintu udah di tambit	(The door has been closed)
Orang ari ulu, orang ari ili	(People from upriver, people from downriver)
Nadai tahu niki agi.	(Are not allowed to come up anymore)

The methods of an oil company amaze me. The Miri Company was a subsidiary one of the Shell group and apparently money was no object. All the same their system of accounts was marvellous, and although they would cheerfully spend a million or so on a "wildcat" scheme, they looked after the cents. In my appointment as Resident, I was ex-officio director of the company. My duties were practically nominal but I drew £500 a year for doing them. Every six months I solemnly attended a Board Meeting, voted myself the money, and then saw it paid into the Government Treasury. This procedure always provoked loud laughter from my fellow directors, and the "boy" (who was always handy) was called and drinks consumed at my expense!

Apart from oil, Miri had many attractions. For one thing the Kadayans live there. These are a very little known-about people. In fact, I have never read anything about them at all. They are Mohamedan and one might confuse them with Malays until one hears them talk. The women always (well, they did back in my time) dress in black and it suits them quite a lot. There is one thing about the Kadayans and that is the complete dominance of the males over females - at least outwardly. Of course all Sarawak people know the old saying "in the mosquito curtain a lion, in the field a frog", but it did astonish me to see the women and girls staggering into Miri burdened with loads of vegetables and fruit for market while their husbands and brothers slowly cycled alongside. Miri was flattened out by Allied fleets and planes, and it was here the Japanese first invaded Sarawak.

The oil field started just about the time I arrived in the country (actually 1910). In its early days it was rather a tough spot. Most of the drillers were American and it is said that some of them could only just sign their names. Nevertheless, they drew enormous pay in gold dollars, (about three times as much as the Resident) and what is more they spent it.

Just as I was settling down again, I was moved. There is no grouse coming as it was more promotion. This time to Sibu where I had started my outstation career in 1912.

Originally Sibu was a strategic point, the meeting of the Rejang and Igan Rivers. I can think of no other reason for choosing this pestiferous little island as a big headquarters. It has no natural attractions and you never know when your flowers and your dining room floor will be covered with evil smelling waste water and yet it is a place which has the undying affection of all those who have lived there.

Fort Brooke, built in 1862, was attacked by Dayaks in 1870. The enemy was beaten off and their axe marks could be seen on the walls. One old man I knew was a boy at the time, and remembers his father lying on the floor of a nearby hut with a muzzle loading shot gun full up with nails, slugs, and bits of iron waiting for something to happen. As a thanks-offering he later carved the Sarawak arms and Motto and affixed it on one of the ports. Kapit was the show-place of the Division - a real live Fort right in the middle of the Dayak country where the District Officer used to sleep in the middle of the building so that the sentry could keep sentry beat around him all night. It used to be painted a rather ghastly shade of red, with black and yellow band (the Sarawak Flag). This was by command of the second Rajah

because he said the Dayaks would insist on squirting pinang (betel) juice out of their mouths and so soiling the whitewash.

It is not the experience for everyone to start a town. When I was a youngster at Sibu many years before, I was called into the office of my Resident one day. He was, I think, the coolest and least excitable man I have ever known (Mr. J. Baring-Gould). He told me that I was to start a Government Station at Sarikei.

Now Sarikei was a fairly big Malay village some forty miles down river and reputed to be a very naughty place. Much to my surprise, I was handed the small sum of $350, given one clerk and two policemen and told to go ahead. Down I went with staff and my silver dollars and looked around the mess I was to transfer into a Station. At first I lived in the back room of a Chinese shophouse together with a large family and the friendly smell of the pigs.

In a fortnight I had a rough office built, a barracks for my two policemen and a little house for the clerk. With the help of the Malay Chief, we cut down a tall slender straight tree for a flagstaff. On the appointed day, I assembled the city elders and amidst cheers hoisted the Sarawak flag.

One of the most exhilarating sights in Sibu was the departure and arrival of the Chinese owned launches. There were about fifty of them. The hubbub started about six each morning with a chorus of klaxon horns and whistles. Then more modern methods to attract customers were introduced. One launch gave a free cigarette to each passenger. Then another gave a cigarette and a cup of coffee. Not to be outdone a third offered a cigarette, a cup of coffee and a piece of cake.

Just before I left Sibu on transfer an extraordinary thing happened. One day a report came up from the Igan River that large parties of Dayaks there had suddenly armed themselves, turned out in parties and slaughtered eight *penyamun*. Now *penyamun* is difficult to translate but on this occasion it meant a party of men, probably strangers, who were going around killing innocent people, probably for some odd cult of their own. Well, we took the usual action in such cases and in two or three days we had thirty of them in gaol. They offered no resistance and appeared to be quite unconscious of any sense of guilt. It turned out that a party of strangers were travelling around the Igan collecting snake and crocodile skins. As happens in so many cases, women were the cause of all the trouble. A party of them went out to their farms to do some work and whilst there observed the strangers. Like a stupid lot of goats they immediately came to the conclusion that they were about to be slaughtered. They panicked and paddling back to their respective long-houses aroused their menfolk. Like wildfire the news spread. Parties of armed husbands, fathers and brothers manned their long-boats. The result was the massacre of the skin hunters.

It was of course murder, pure and simple. The Dayaks admitted the killing, but stoutly upheld their opinion that it was a case of *penyamun*. I had to try the case, and it was here that one has to distinguish between the law and native customs. These Dayaks, peaceable and law abiding men, had for the brief space of time reverted to their savage custom and taken, in their opinion, the right steps to put down and exterminate a danger to their community and to the public in general. It became a

case of great importance at the time and I was much criticised for reducing the charge to one of culpable homicide and sentencing all thirty of them to ten years each.

I am glad to say that about two years later the Rajah gave them a free pardon. These men did not consider that they had done wrong and I am of the opinion that the sentences which should have been given would have shocked every Dayak and Malay in the country.

XI

I Saw Things Which You Would Not See Today

During my time in the service, I saw many things which one would not see nowadays. I saw a Chinese take an oath by cutting off a fowl's head; I saw a Melanau slash a dog in half; I saw a real dyed-in-the-wool *amok*, a very bloody business; I saw a lunatic running through the bazaar naked; I saw murder and I saw judicial executions.

In fact I think I saw the last judicial execution by the *kris* (a Malay dagger). The official method of execution used to be a stab to the heart. The method sounds a bloody business but properly done there is no more blood than will stain a small piece of cotton wool. The victim's hands are tied behind his back and he squats on the ground. The executioner places a small dab of cotton wool round his *kris* and, standing behind, plunges it downwards just above the collar bone. If he does it well it goes straight into the heart and death is instantaneous. In spite of popular opinion the *kris* used is not one of the wavy sort but perfectly straight (this *kris* can be seen in the Sarawak Museum). I have handled the execution *kris* at Sibu scores of times. There were, so far as I know, but two men in Sarawak who were competent or had the nerve to perform these sorts of executions (Subu 1841-1872, followed by his son Tomah until execution by shooting was adopted). It required a very steady hand and no hesitation. The one I saw was bungled.

Amok

The *amok* was unpleasant. A policeman suddenly went wild in Sibu bazaar and before we could stop him he killed five persons and wounded twenty-five. As it all took place in semi-darkness there was a certain amount of panic among the inhabitants of the packed bazaar. All I know is that I tumbled over a corpse in the dark and found myself entangled up in yards of intestines. There is a bit of humour in everything: hearing someone running towards me through the darkness I had to think quickly. I did so and brought crashing down one of my own policemen. However, we got our man at last and spent all night helping the doctor to patch up the wounded. It was here I saw a miracle - or thought I did - a severed ear just clapped on again and it stuck.

I was in Sadong once and saw a small Malay boy taken by a crocodile. He was bathing in the river and the crocodile grabbed him and bore him away just showing above water. We raced up and down the bank for hours but it was no good. The wailing women were led back and we gathered in the headman's house to organise a search for the body. Have you ever seen a magic show in which a girl is put in a box, sawn in half and suddenly appears at the back of the audience? Well, that is what happened here. The child suddenly entered the house from the back door and walked through us all - apparently the brute did not like his taste and let him go. The damage was only slight.

Anachronism?

It has been said that Sarawak was an anachronism; that Sarawak was standing still whilst others pushed forward to prosperity. Whatever truth there is in this, we did not burden the country with a public debt nor did we make a great show of ruling. Nevertheless, it was inevitable that it could not last. The first world war shook us, but we recovered. The second world war finished it. Sarawak was out-dated. In whatever way you look at it the spectacle of European internees and prisoners of war during the Japanese occupation marching in labour gangs, weeding on the road side, ragged, hungry and thin, most certainly foretold a change. Few people like altering their habits but those with vision could clearly see that the old outstation days were no longer possible.

1939 is such a long time ago that one's memory becomes dulled. All I know is that things had not been going too smoothly and there was a general feeling in the outstations that the Secretariat was running Sarawak like a department store. Eventually, there was a regular bust-up. The Rajah and his nephew, Anthony Brooke, took an active part in the affair. The result was the resignation of the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary, the Chief Justice, and the Director of Lands and Surveys.

The question of Cession, of which I will write later, comes into this matter, but the rift between the Rajah and his nephew seems to date from those unfortunate days.

On 1st April 1939 (of all days) I became Chief Secretary of Sarawak. New men in new posts all round me - everything at sixes and sevens, it really was an awful mess. However, I was just getting used to things, and thinking that it was not so bad after all when war broke out in Europe. From now on it was a continual drudgery of defence schemes and war legislation, and hush hush codes and ciphers and all the rest of the stuff for war on paper.

The 1941 Constitution

In 1941, the Rajah decided to grant a Constitution to the state, and I was instructed to set things in motion. Now, in the best of times this is a most complicated business. Nations have warred over it; politicians have risen and fallen; kings have lost their thrones. Whether this period was a good time to do it I do not propose to argue, but the Rajah expressed his strong wishes, in fact his command, that such a Constitution should coincide with the Centenary of Brooke rule, which would take

place on September 24th 1941. In March the Rajah publicly expressed his desire and work started. It certainly was a burden. However, I was not to finish what I had started as on May 2nd I was permitted to resign all my appointments and go into retirement. This was a matter directly concerning the Rajah and myself, and no one else had a hand in it. Admittedly I felt a bit depressed as I handed over to my successor. From the shy, callow youth of February 1912, I had developed into a hard-bitten, and some say cynical, chief executive. What a lot I had seen and how many changes. But there was one distinction that I valued; I was the last of the staff of the second Rajah to go. In March the Rajah conferred upon me the First Class of the Order of the Star of Sarawak. This is perhaps one of the rarest Orders in the world. Only three persons have been decorated with the First Class and I was the one survivor. The Order is no longer given, but just before the Cession of the State the Rajah conferred the Second and Third Class on a few persons who had merited distinction both during the Japanese Occupation of Sarawak and afterwards (this order has recently been revived).

No Peace

There is no peace for the wicked, and on July 1st I was working again. This time I was in charge of propaganda, information and the editorship of the old *Sarawak Gazette*. In addition I was enrolled as a special constable and did some censoring. We arranged broadcasts in English, Malay, Dayak, and Chinese but in those days the country was not very wireless minded. I went up to Miri once in order to hear what it sounded like. At eight o'clock I was all agog waiting outside the Government Offices where a loud speaker was ready to blare out to the enormous crowds my carefully prepared messages and bulletins. Lord, what a flop! One small Chinese boy sucking a sweet, an old Chinese beggar, not right in the head, a Government clerk having a last puff at a cigarette before going into his office, a blank looking young secretary and an intoxicated Tamil sleeping it off. Astonished and deeply hurt, I interrogated the Resident. "Oh no," he said " no one listens to it as far as I know."

Miri was a net-work of gadgets and surprises meant to outwit the Japanese. There was the switch in the Resident's bedroom which was intended for blowing up the several million dollars of refinery at Lutong if war started suddenly. Horrible stories went round of the Resident walking in his sleep or getting slightly tight and so on - and blowing the wretched works sky high. Actually nothing like that was possible but they gave thought to ribald and evil-disposed persons.

It was rather a hopeless task trying to put over propaganda. Naturally some of the people, principally Chinese, had a good idea of what war meant. China had been at war for years, although the Japanese always called it an "incident". The Dayaks, Malays, Melanaus and others had little or no conception. War to them was one of our "expeditions" where a few Sarawak Rangers and Police accompanied by hundreds of irregulars toiled up rivers and up and down hills chasing a few slippery Dayak malcontents who were always one march ahead. If casualties came to double figures it was a major battle.

Sukiyaki

When I was passing through Singapore on my way back from furlough in 1939, I visited a Japanese house down the East Coast road to sup off that splendid Japanese dish know as ***sukiyaki***. We were a party of four and whilst we squatted on the floor watching the girls prepare and cook it we got talking. They spoke some Malay and some English. We asked them their names and asked them to guess our professions. Well, blast my buttons, if those girls didn't know not only our names but our jobs and where we lived! Not much of a story but just an inkling as to what a far-reaching spy system they must have had. Again, a few days after I was captured I was called before one of the local Japanese residents who had obviously stepped into some official position at once. He called for my dossier and I could not help noticing that it was a pretty fat document already. This was confirmed when he read out extracts from it. My personal and domestic life was apparently no secret to the Japanese; I was amazed at the lot they knew about me.

XII

Three Events in 1941 Brought Great Changes to Sarawak

Three most important events happened in 1941. Briefly they were, first, an agreement was made between the Rajah and the Committee of Administration, of which I was President, in which the Rajah transferred certain powers to the Chief Secretary, in the capacity of Officer Administering the Government, and in return the Rajah received certain promises from the Committee. These included financial arrangements whereby the Rajah and his family were safe-guarded; confirmation of certain prerogatives and the promise to honour all existing contracts between the Rajah and the officers of the Sarawak government. The Rajah promised that neither he, nor any member of his family would have any claim on the funds of the Government of Sarawak.

Second, the Rajah granted a new Constitution to the State.

Third, the Rajah-in-Council agreed to accept a British representative under certain conditions.

Those three events marked an entire change in the administration of the State. Up till then the reigning Rajah, notwithstanding the Supreme Council or Council Negri, had absolute autocratic powers.

It is debatable whether 1941 was an opportune time to effect the great change. Many thought it would have been better to shelve the whole thing and finish the war first. However, the Rajah desired that the centenary of Brooke rule should be marked

by the granting of a Constitution. The date of this centenary was 24th September - just three months to a day before Kuching was captured by the enemy.

War and Alarms

In spite of the war and all its alarms, the day of the centenary was a momentous occasion. The *Sarawak Government* published a special Centenary number, which I edited, and if you find one of these rare copies, it gives an account of the proceedings. Six languages were used in the number. One of the ships which was in Kuching for the occasion, later went down gloriously in a naval engagement off Ceylon. I refer to H.M.A.S. *Vampire*. It was a colourful and impressive ceremony, all the more wonderful because it took place on the very verge of disaster to the Imperial and local forces in the country and the subsequent horrors and misery of three years and nine months of Japanese barbarism.

It was the last public appearance of the Rajah and Ranee before their exile of over four years. The Ranee, in one of her books, speaks of the difficulty in getting the Rajah "to the post" for his big official appearances. He was, I know, a shy man and shared with the Duke of Windsor the habit of twiddling with his tie when appearing in public. I have been near him many times just before he was due to make a speech and candidly I often thought he would not make it.

The Centenary celebrations attracted much attention from outside, and war newspaper correspondents and press photographers arrived to cover the ceremony. It was indeed a unique one. After the loyal addresses had been read and presented, beautifully embossed and wrapped in the royal yellow silk, there were two more presentations of a very different character. Tememggong Koh, the premier Dayak Chief, advanced towards His Highness and offered a *parang* (sword) and shield and a spear. Then old Datu Udin, who died during the occupation, advanced with an ancient Melanau bowl, a high mark of homage and fealty. All the processions, the exhibition, the lights and lanterns, the bands and the military parades marked an epoch in the history of State. I think there were some people there who saw perhaps the beginning of the end. Could the country really be administered by a Council so long as the Rajah remained? It is easy to be wise after the event, but did my words in that Centenary Gazette reflect my feelings? "The ceremony took place on that historic Wednesday not only amidst His Highness's loyal subjects but also amidst sailors, soldiers and airmen of His Majesty the King . . . What better indication that Sarawak is now joined together (written in 1946) with that great commonwealth of nations to meet the onslaught of a common enemy". Had I foreseen the loom of Cession? I rather think I had.

Unapprehensive

The Rajah and the Ranee left Sarawak and we settled down to rationing, Air Raid Precaution exercises, drilling, constructing air raid shelters and ever increasing office work. The poor people appeared to be unapprehensive. Perhaps the vast amount of good work done by the Food Control and Essential Commodity people lulled their senses. I cannot speak too highly of the courage with which all officials faced the

coming storm. Well, it had to break some time or other. When it came it was even a bigger one than we had expected. On the 8th December the balloon went up following a landing by Japanese troops at Kota Bahru in the Malay Peninsular. Black outs started and many got into uniform. I became a special constable and wandered around in uniform, tin hat, a revolver and all. On two occasions I had to escort Japanese civilian internees from the internment camp to their homes in order that they might put their private affairs in order. In view of what happened to us later when the positions were reversed I think I treated them remarkably well.

However, nothing much happened until the morning of the 16th December when the wireless station at Kuala Belait informed us that the Japanese flag was flying over the big oil refinery at Lutong, seven miles from Miri. Further signals faded out and we know that on the night of the 15th the enemy landed in force all around Miri and captured its entire oilfield.

On the same day Kuching had its first air raid. The Japanese bombed and machine-gunned part of the town. The actual damage was small, and considering the possibilities the casualties were less than was expected, about a hundred killed and wounded, all Chinese. The fires caused by the raid were extinguished that evening. As usual stories of the raid began to circulate. It is said that one bomb fell into a big septic tank and was still there unexploded when we lost the town some days later. We hoped that this was true so that the Japanese might get a bit of their own back.

A few days before this, on the 14th, we had our first experience of war at sea. One of our local ships was attacked by a bomber whilst coming down the coast. She managed to get into Kuching with a few casualties. The Rajah's yacht, which was in convoy, had a lucky escape. She was full of native troops and their families evacuating from Miri and one bomb would have sent her straight to the bottom. This actually happened three years later when an Allied plane sank her without the slightest difficulty by dropping a small bomb down her funnel. All this made the people of Kuching very panicky and for days the roads were full of townspeople evacuating to the country. Bullock carts, rickshaws, perambulators, bicycles, delivery tricycles and hand-carts were pressed into service.

Man-Power Office

Miri and the north was now entirely cut off. Dutch planes flew up to attack the Japanese fleet and transports lying offshore. I became man-power officer; part of this job consisting of interviewing European evacuees from the oilfields and putting them into temporary jobs.

The last few days, I am afraid, were rather a mess. The blame if any rested on much higher authority than the Sarawak Government. At nearly midnight on 23rd, I was informed that the enemy had landed at Sibu Laut. I immediately armed myself and spent until six in the morning burning my files and helping the Secretariat to destroy theirs. The people had got the news and just as dawn broke the final exodus from the town began. It was an eerie scene. Persons flitting about in the dark and nervously challenging each other. I returned home, had my last bath and shave for

some time, and went down to my office. Only one nervous clerk and an obviously terrified office boy were there, but longing to go home. A little later a Japanese plane arrived and started dropping leaflets. This was the last straw and even the most valiant began to clear out. The leaflets were of the usual kind. The cruel British trampling down Islam under its feet (actually illustrated too), warnings to the public about sabotage and hindering the Japanese forces and promises of rewards for persons helping the invading armies.

There was nothing to be done. The armed forces had moved out to positions outside the town. At two o'clock I was told to go to the telephone exchange where another European was valiantly trying to keep the operators on their seats and the thing going. We had noticed a extraordinary hush outside. Then all of a sudden a Malay rushed into the exchange with the story that Mr. X had been dragged out of his car right in the middle of the town and that we were surrounded. We looked out of the window and could see soldiers in a distance. It was realised that something had to be done so we jumped into our car and at the first corner our suspicions were confirmed. A detachment of soldiers were advancing towards the Police Station out of which dashed a number of Sikh policemen holding up their hands. One or two were apparently so eager to be on the right side with their captors that they advanced with one arm up and the other stretched out to shake hands! I had to decide in a hurry; if I turned left I now know that I should have probably got away as some others did as the Japanese had not penetrated as far as that. I am no hero but I had given my word that I would stay when the Japanese came in so I turned to the right. Just opposite the General Post Office I ran into a posse of them. My driver pulled up. A revolting looking officer pushed what looked like a horse pistol at my head. I glanced round and there was another Japanese doing the same thing through the other window.

XIII

A Prisoner of War Under the Japanese

Out I came, and from the corner of my eye saw my friend doing the same. My Malay driver was captured too. We three were then marched up the street, with pistols held at our backs. However, like the Duke of York's Army, we had to march all the way back again as the Japanese did not know the right road. Eventually, we reached the main street of the town which runs alongside the river. Here were seven or eight Europeans with their hands tied behind their backs sitting in the middle of the road. We had our hands tied (each Japanese seemed to have a coil of rope attached to his equipment) and were unceremoniously pushed down onto our haunches too. A young Japanese officer wearing enormous spectacles then approached us and held a leaflet up for us to read. It was one of those dropped in the morning. He then began to warn us in English of our fate if we tried to escape. I cannot imagine where he learnt his English, but I remember that each sentence ended that if we did such and such a thing, "you die".

Japanese troops were arriving every minute and soon considerable numbers were assembling and marching off. Many were soaking wet and some had swum the river. All wore extremely good camouflage in the way of leaves and branches. In fact they seemed to be efficient and workman-like troops. They wore the queer boots with a separate space for the big toe which gave them rather a disturbing "Pan-like" effect. The only thing which lightened our depression was the odd little cannon which they trundled about rather like a child's Hobby horse or go-cart.

Roped together

Presently we were all roped together and marched off to the stone landing steps where we were embarked on a cranky ferry-boat. What would have happened if someone had slipped or the boat capsized, I do not know. However, we got over to the Astana and were thrown into a small store room formerly used for storing crockery. There were twelve of us and the same number of natives - most of them Dayak Rangers or men of the Punjab Regiment. When I say "thrown in", I mean so literally, as we were quite helpless. By means of tight fastened rope, we were bound hands, feet and neck - and then roped together. If anyone moved his hands, he was nearly throttled; if one moved one's legs, it tore into the flesh of the next man. It did seem, indeed, that there was a bit of hate on as we were visited from time to time during those forty-eight long hours of neither day nor night by drunken officers and men who had a bit of fun at our sorry plight. One slapped us over the head with the flat of his sword; another threw bottles at us; some of them kicked us; others poked at us with their bayonets and all of them laughed at our misfortune. One informed us that we were about to be shot; another mentioned throat cutting with a vivid gesture of his hand.

There comes a time when horrors and misery are overcome by a merciful insensibility to pain. Although during those days we had only two sips of water and no food, I, personally, had no dreams of babbling brooks and green oases. For the last twelve hours, I think most of us were babbling ourselves. I was quite convinced that I was in the hold of a ship and that the Japanese were taking us to sea. We were messed up in our own evacuations; we could not stir a limb and our throats and tongues were past all feeling. There were sounds of rifle shots outside - whether this was to scare us, I do not know. The Japanese certainly did their best to humiliate and break our spirits. We greeted each other on Christmas morning. Croaking voices said to each other "a happy Christmas to you". We lay sprawled over each other in our tight bands and in our filth. I had it in my heart to whisper, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men" but my parched throat would not allow me to repeat this blasphemy.

Complete Flop

Two days later we were released from our ropes and marched through the streets to the Police Station; our hands still tied behind our backs. The Japanese had apparently staged a demonstration and both sides of the road and the stone landing steps were thronged by large crowds of people. A few collaborators darted about among the crowd, especially one Chinese gentleman with a brand-new hat and an enormous

cigar. We learnt later that he was all ready for the Japanese and had been made Civil Governor of a district. The spectacle was a great flop. The crowds stood with eyes turned away as the ragged column of Indians and Europeans marched in fours up the road.

Our adventures, until we finally reached our permanent camp at Batu Lintang in July, 1942, were, I suppose, not very different from those undergone by other internees. In the Police station we shed our disgusting clothes and looked about for food. The Japanese have a peculiar idea about prisoners. Apparently in Japan a civil prisoner has to feed himself. If his relatives or friends omit or are unable to do so then it is just too bad. We found an ally in a Hylam Chinese cook who sent us in food for the first two weeks at his own expense. God bless you, Ah Kui. The decoration conferred on you for this and other services is well deserved.(Minggu Ah Kui was the Rest House cook. For this and other services rendered to internees at great personal risk he was awarded the Order of the Star of Sarawak by the Rajah in 1946).

In a few days we numbered over thirty Europeans as new arrivals kept on coming in. We were then moved to a bungalow nearby (*Zaida*), and it was here that we might have been blown sky high. Dutch planes came over and dropped bombs. I believe that their target was a big bomb and ammunition dump just outside our camp.

Odd Lot

The Japanese are an odd lot. Some of us complained of toothache and our gaolers agreed to march a small party down to the dentist. Arriving there we were told to wait. We did so for an hour or so and were then marched back again to camp. Ten minutes after we had been dismissed we had to fall in again and go off for a second time. Another wait and back again. Much laughter greeted us from our friends and we were about to enquire about our midday meal when, blast my buttons, if we were not fallen in again. The next minute saw us marching down once more, only to return with aching jaws and, of course, too late for anything to eat. Apparently the Japanese Navy was in command of Kuching and they hated the Army. The Army in turn looked down on their civilian officials.

However, the Japanese did not have it all their own way. One day we saw a procession of them carrying small white boxes slung in front of each man by tapes. We were told that each contained the ashes of a Japanese warrior en route for shipment to Japan.

After a while, we were moved to the Roman Catholic Convent at Padungan. There we were joined by another batch of internees from the north. Slowly the camp began to be organised. Cleanliness comes next to Godliness and the way in which a number of very senior priests tackled the primitive sanitary arrangements gave support to the old adage.

Endless Questions

A thing which used to annoy us was the continual questioning. Not content with our ages, occupation and matrimonial affairs they always seemed to want to pry into our families. Have you any brother? What are their professions? Do you like ladies? Why did you marry your present wife? They also wanted to know a lot about the Rajah. "How many wives does he keep? How much did he pay you for being Chief Secretary? Was that all I got, or were there chances of taking 'presents'? How was it that the Rajah did not have a son?"

Early in my imprisonment I was called to appear before a high civil official. He asked me if I would work for the Japanese Government. If I would do so, I would be able to live in my own house, given an adequate salary and a good appointment. "If the position were reversed," I asked :what would your answer be?" He smiled, gave me a cigarette and drove me back to the camp in his own car. Another gentleman was not so nice; he kept rapping my knuckles with a ruler. My information and propaganda job nearly landed me in a fix. I fully admitted that I had done all I could to run them down. It was done by all belligerents, Japan probably more than others. Luckily my questioner had probably had a good lunch and he merely made me squat on my toes and hold my hands above my head for five minutes. That does not sound very bad, I hear you say, but any of you fifty-year olds just try it.

Ration System

We learnt that Singapore had fallen and our hopes of a speedy release were now shattered. We took in a hole in our belts and began to organise a ration system. One morning the Japanese arrived in force and ordered us to pack up and move off at once. We collected our wretched belongings together and piled ourselves into lorries. Japanese army drivers, especially in conquered countries, do not bother about the rule of the road. We clung on to possessions swinging round the bends and had to stop once when one of our valued tables was sent hurtling into a hedge.

Each time we moved camp no one was ever certain of our destination. Bets were laid, and you might be quite sure that anything a Japanese official said was not "out of the horse's mouth". Then, two and a half miles out of town we stopped, and now we knew that what was to be our final camp for over three years was the old one lately occupied by the 2/15th Punjabis.

XIV

Lintang Internment Camp

Lintang Camp - that name will never fade from the memory of the many hundreds of men and women who were imprisoned there.

Before death started its grim work we numbered between two thousand five hundred and three thousand persons. The Japanese divided us up into separate pens, as it were, but all the camps were practically next to each other. The biggest camp was that of the British troops next door, and only separated by a line of wire, came our lot, about a hundred and sixty civilians. A little further away was a camp of British Officers, then one of Australian Officers (distinction without a difference?) and finally one for Indonesian troops. On the other side of us were the Indian Army personnel; Roman Catholic Priests and at the very end, separated by about two hundred yards, the women and children.

At first, the latter were imprisoned across the road opposite our camp but the habit of husbands looking longingly at their wives and children across the space between, and throwing surreptitious kisses to them, shocked the Japanese so much that the women were moved as far as possible from such contamination. "Such conduct", the Commandant said, "undermines the morals of my troops, whose wives and children are in far-away Japan."

On rare occasions, the husbands were allowed to meet their wives for half an hour under strict guard. The place chosen for these meetings was the pig-sty. Any signs of affection were forbidden. One old man caught kissing his wife was severely punished.

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment was the Japanese cure for all troubles. The Colonel slapped the Major, who boxed the ears of the Captain, who hit the Lieutenant, who kicked the Sergeant, who hit, slapped and kicked us.

After a time the old garrison was removed. We learnt later that they went to die in New Guinea and Burma. They were replaced by youngsters from Formosa and North China. At first they were soft and raw but after days of regular training they developed into sadistic bullies. We called them "Sugar babies" after our Commandant, Colonel Suga. All of them soon gained appropriate nicknames such as, "Gig lamps", "the Weasel", "Snake Eyes", "Piano Legs", "The Tape Worm", etc.

The language was always a difficulty. Suga, the Commandant, spoke an extraordinary brand of English - for instance having dined well he became conversational and told our Camp Master that he liked the pond near his quarters as it enabled him to "fish for corpses". The most horrible ideas sprang into the Camp Master's mind; such as the supposed German corpse factory in World War I; what

exactly was the odd bit of meat we had the other day that was such a windfall? Of course, the fat little Colonel meant carp.

From time to time we had important visitors. The high spot, I suppose, was the visit of Prince Maeda. He was a Field Marshall and a cousin of the Emperor and the Chief in these parts. Shortly afterwards he was killed in the flying crash near Bintulu.

Most of our visitors were military officials who merely stalked in and stalked out again.

Amazing Visit

One amazing visit was that of a party of Japanese army nurses. Guided by an officer these girls marched into the camp, left right, left right, and wheeled into line. After a short talk, probably a warning against the "white dogs", they broke off and scattered to go through our huts. No notice had been given and our acute shortage of clothing must have embarrassed them. If it did, they did not show it. This spectacle was a good example of the influence of the west over the east. Rather neat white caps, blouses and baggy bloomers; white bobby-sox and shoes. Lipstick, rouge, powder and mascara. But, oh! what awful bandy legs; what shapeless tops and what tremendous sit-upons.

We organised lectures and talks but these were not well received by the Japanese whose secret society complex was a revelation. We had only half a dozen hymn books, so on slips of paper we copied out a couple of dozen of the more popular ones. One day these slips were seized and that was the last we saw of them. After many weeks of enquiries we were told that these hymns contained subversive and dangerous propaganda. For instance, "Fight the good fight." What more proof could they have that under the cloak of piety we were exhorting our fellow prisoners to rebel against the co-prosperity plan.

Food

As time went on, duodenal ulcers, acid stomachs, that "full feeling" after meals, rapidly disappeared. The gentlemen who could not possibly eat *blachan* (shrimp paste), or salt fish, or raw sago underwent a marvellous cheap cure. It came to the day when we had to experiment on Giant African snails, rats and bits of grass. There is a disgraceful story about a pony, once no doubt the pride of the Turf Club. The poor beast picked up what it could to eat but the main attraction was our garbage heap. We went through our food with pretty fine comb and what went onto the heap was really garbage - that is stuff that even the least fastidious could not swallow. One day this very hungry pony poked its head in at one of the entrances. He scented the heap; poor beast; he was hungry as we were. One or two hangers-on noticed this; stealthily they procured an axe. With great cunning they lured their prey into the camp with some choice titbit. No sentry was looking at the moment - Crash! the axe descended; pole-axed, the beast fell. Quicker than I can write it was dismembered and removed. In a minute not a spot of blood, not a faction of skin remained to show the Japanese what had happened.

Stray dogs too in search of board and lodging disappeared. Cats; well, all cats are grey in the dark. I always was fond of rabbit. The Japanese once gave us three pigs to fatten. What they were to get fat on I really cannot say. Believe me, anything edible that got out of the kitchen after the scrutiny of our cook and his staff was not fit for a pig to eat. Later on, just as our pigs were putting on flesh (miracles never cease), disquieting rumours got around that the pigs were only lent, that is, we were to fatten them, give them back and receive some more. That night the biggest died of a "mysterious complaint" and in spite of a warning by two of our best surgeons that the meat was unsafe for human consumption, we hardened out hearts and devoured it. I did not note that the surgeons abstained. The next pig to die soon afterwards roused unworthy suspicions and that was the end of our piggery.

The Pets

In stories of prisons there are invariably the pets which the prisoners keep out of their scanty fare but the only pet we ever had was a goat. We called it Eustace. Why, I do not know considering it was obviously feminine and later produced a kid. However, although like most goats it could live on the "smell of a dirty rag", there just was not any food to give it so the time came when it was decided that she should go into the cooking pot. This caused quite a stir. Poster artists (we had several) opened a picture campaign. One that touched our hearts was a portrait of Eustace looking sadly at us over the inscription 'BE KIND AND LET ME LIVE. I HAVE DONE NOTHING WRONG." A petition signed by many influential internees was presented to the committee. A reprieve was allowed but the cooks were not beaten. In a fortnight after several days of extremely lean rations, they opened up a fresh attack. This time all our sob stuff was of no avail - Eustace went into the pot.

I used to think that the rubber business was a distasteful sort of job; "heaven-born" civil servants were apt to look down on it. Never again shall I regard rubber except with gratitude. From the few rubber trees in our camp we tapped the latex. We used it to stick our bandages over ulcers; to patch our shorts, shirts and shoes; to waterproof our hats and even mend our pipes.

The sentence you know, is so much easier to bear than the sentence you do not know. During those years of captivity there was always the hope that the next day, the next week, anyway before the end of the year, would bring us deliverance from our enemies.

Rumours

I do not know how rumours start. One day an Indian hawker passed our camp and called out that Mussolini was dead - a bit premature. Quite early our friendly Sikh police told us the Japanese were evacuating Kuching. The Pope was dead. So was Queen Mary. The Allies had captured Miri and numerous other rumours. Anyway, it is a poor heart that does not snatch at a chance. As early as 1942 we had a plan of escape if news of the approaching relief forces could be verified. I was appointed the leader of one party, and I remember trying to think out ways of taking with us one

who had lost a leg when a Japanese plane attacked H.M.S. *Lipis* when evacuating the Oilfields personnel from Miri.

The Japanese did explode one theory. The average European can do hard manual work in the tropics.

In our case nature abhors a vacuum, and not only did prisoners go under from weakness for want of food but also from the ulcers and sepsis caused by malnutrition. As the months went by, more and more of us became unhealthy. No wound would heal by itself and there was nothing to help it. In many cases the first stages of weight losing were beneficial, but there came a time when it was not possible to live on our own fat. Most of the men I saw tried valiantly to carry on. The forced labour had to be done and a sick man was a nuisance to everyone. Towards the end, admission to the General Hospital was getting very near a death sentence. I spent some days in the dysentery ward. Those nights of groans, sighs and unimaginable filth, and sometimes feeble murmuring will forever haunt me. Did the Man of Sorrows look with pity in His eyes upon His bedraggled creatures?

XV

Spending Christmas in Lintang Camp

At first, we internees had to work out at the old landing ground (now Semengok Camp) four and a half miles away. The Japanese re-opened the old railway which had been closed for some years and took us out in open goods trucks with spheroid wheels. In the last three months we were there we removed part of a hill and filled in a swamp. Although these were early days we were already becoming a ragged crew as many of us had only the clothes in which we were captured.

Our first Christmas in Lintang, and our second in imprisonment, was spent with mixed feelings. Home-made toys were sent, by permission, to the children in the camp up the road. This was emphasised as a great concession, (the great *bushido* was dragged in again) although it did not excuse the children from the ordeal of bowing and saluting. Some of them were growing up with but a hazy idea of their fathers. Mothers may have pointed out to them the scare-crow looking fellow watching them go by, behind a barrier of barbed wire.

Stricter

The Japanese began to get much stricter. Lists of regulations were read out. On paper it did not look so bad; in fact, anyone reading it would say that the Japanese were running the camps efficiently and well. Of course, it was all a lot of eye-wash. Nothing was ever up to standard. The hospital was a farce and a very grim one. Medical inspections were half hearted; anyway our doctors could do little as they had not even the most elementary drugs and instruments. The so-called "rations"

depended on the mood of the Japanese Quartermaster. Promises were broken daily; they were never at a loss for an excuse.

After the first phase of the occupation, when the Japanese organisation was in a mess, we were treated badly. I am ready to believe that for a time discipline was out of hand. The advance had been so quick and easy that the invading forces had not completed operations. At the beginning of 1943 things had not gone to plan. From that time onwards their treatment of us got worse and worse. We were just a damned nuisance and the sooner they could get rid of us the better, so long as it was not done too openly. Except for the activities of the *Kempeitai* (Japanese secret police), the faults of our captors were more those of omission rather than commission. Nobody wanted us. The military hated the sight of us and we were left to the base wallahs whom the fighting forces also held in contempt; and a number of local civilians recently turned soldiers. I gathered that the high military commanders took the line "let them rot", and rot we did. The war as far as the local forces could judge, had by-passed Sarawak. The garrisons hated it. The people were unfriendly, and it was always raining. Many of the soldiers had been fighting in China and had not seen their families for years. Their mood was reflected in their attitude towards us. They loathed Sarawak and they loathed us for keeping them here. It was evident too, that they disliked their officers intensely.

Settling Down

Gradually, the camp settled down to its orderly existence. A committee was formed (so English!) but the Japanese were always on the look out for plots and put a stop to general meetings of the whole camp. They forced us to appoint various officials. All except the Camp Master, his deputy and the Medical Officers were therefore our own choice. However, nothing the Japanese organised ever really worked. Liaison meetings, sick parades, working parties, ration parties or general parades were chopped and changed around in a most aggravating way. Unless one was able accurately to forestall their tortuous ideas, it gave them an opportunity of reviling us for breach of some regulation or other. I think the non-commissioned officers were so bullied themselves that they looked upon us as good subjects on which to vent their spleen.

For a time the Japanese sent in a Tokyo newspaper printed in English. It was depressing to read of advance after advance and to realise that for a time they did seem to be mistress of the Far Eastern Seas. Then Italy capitulated. They explained this away by saying that it was a relief to Japan and Germany to be rid of such a faint-hearted ally. Soon the supply of newspapers ceased; the reason given was lack of transport from Japan - a sign of the times. There were other signs too that things were not going well for the Japanese. Stories of the launching of locally built ships so badly put together that they opened up at once; of ships with no engines; of a new vessel which turned turtle on her maiden voyage ten minutes after leaving the wharf. In it were a hundred and fifty high ranking officers who were drowned like rats. The electric power had failed. There was no benzine, and bullock carts were replacing motor vehicles. The water mains were bursting. The townspeople would not co-operate so this led to a little "persuasion" - not too much force, merely a bit of face

slapping, body kicking and for the really obstinate ones, a bout or two of "water treatment'.

Took to the Jungle

The Japanese were surprised, and very hurt, when whole communities took to the jungle and inaccessible places in the interior. It was particularly annoying as ships no longer sailed the seas and the Japanese soldiers found shortage of rice an unendurable trial. The fruit gave them dysentery and the root foods stomach-ache.

Each time Colonel Suga returned from a visit to North Borneo (he was also in charge of camps there) he seemed more and more pessimistic. It was stressed to our camp master that we should consider ourselves lucky; things elsewhere were much worse. This was cold comfort for people living on a diet of semi-starvation.

Colonel Suga

I could not quite make up my mind about Colonel Suga. He told so many stories about himself that it was impossible to say which was the true one. Amongst other things he said that he had been educated in a Methodist school, that he was a Roman Catholic, that he was a schoolmaster and that he was a regular soldier. Just before the end he spoke to me and called on Almighty God to witness that he had not been guilty of intentional cruelty to prisoners-of-war. To us, he was rather a figure of fun, with his comic English and his obvious conceit in his own person. I cannot believe that he was ignorant of all the cruelty and neglect that was going on under his eyes. If he was, then I can only say that he was unfitted to hold that or any responsible position. I must admit, however, that his conduct on the last few days of our imprisonment was not without dignity. His last speech to us, when he had to announce to all the camps the capitulation, was well done. For a moment or two I felt pity for the little man. There he stood, the once powerful Commandant. In front of him were the hundreds of men and women who had been his prisoners for so long. Sticking out his chest like a pouter pigeon, he strutted on to the verandah raised above us. He was not in uniform but wore his sword. In slow and hesitating sentences he read out to us the information of the fall of Japan, his Emperor, his everything. He did not cringe or crawl and he did not spout defiance. For a brief moment he was merely a broken and rather pathetic little person. When the Australians came in he was relieved of his beloved sword and marched off. Later in Labuan, whilst awaiting trial for war crimes, he committed hari-kiri. Somehow or other he was able to saw through his throat with a blunt table knife. Seeing that death still avoided him he instructed his Japanese batman to stun him with a bottle filled with sand. Anyway, the mixture of gore, sand and force finished him off. Undoubtedly he escaped execution.

Different Creature

His second in command was a different sort of creature. Nagata was a hater, pure and simple. He admitted that he hated the English and made no bones about it. It

was said that he served well on some fighting front and was sent to our camp as a reward. He met his well-deserved death before a firing squad.

Yamamoto, the doctor, was a queer fellow. Our own doctor doubted whether he had any medical qualifications at all. When he was first posted to the camp he was certainly not a commissioned officer but later on he blossomed out into a sword-swinging officer and gentleman. He was a queer mixture of almost insane fits of rage and moments of gentleness and understanding. He spoke a little German which he used for explaining medical expressions and terms. Generally, however, he spoke to us (or more often barked at us) in a mixture of Japanese, Malay and English. Sometimes his methods were barbarous. It was said that he took dope which I think was the answer. Whether of not he was responsible for the appalling conditions in our hospital, and whether he tried to better them, I cannot say. He too faced an execution squad.

It would be tiresome to mention all the other officers. There were two very brutal interpreters. One of them was almost maniacal in his explosions of rage. The other, although well educated did not behave much better. Both were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

Worse Conditions

Next door to us, only separated in some places by a single barrier of barbed wire, were the British troops. Their conditions were worse than ours, and much more so when their officers were moved away from them. Some of them had never heard a shot fired, having been captured either as they landed in Singapore or Java.

Soon the climate and the lack of food began to tell on the weakest. There was a great shortage of clothing but this was the men's own fault. Nothing could stop them for exchanging their gear over the wire for tobacco or cigarettes. Most of them arrived with at least a haversack, a water bottle, a blanket, some kind of uniform and cooking utensils. Soon some of them had nothing. One cheerful soul had "flogged" everything except a haversack and a newspaper. He slept with his head in the haversack and newspaper over his feet.

A detachment of Malayan Volunteers arrived. Men of education and position. Soon they were sent to Labuan where they all died.

As the years went by the ranks got less. The weaker the men got the more insistent the Japanese were about the numbers for the working parties. There came a time when, in order to fulfil the Japanese demands, every man who could stand on his feet had to go out.

There was one particular working party which the Japanese themselves nicknamed the *stengah mati gang* (the gang of the half dead). After the way they were being treated it was but a short cut to the cemetery where all those *stengah mati* were soon to go.

More on the Lintang Camp

I remember working alongside a little conscript. He was not supposed to talk to me. He was a cheerful little chap and laughingly described himself as "the bantam weight champion of his hut". He was a trifle over five stone. When he died, I am told that even the hard-boiled medical orderlies almost wept when they prepared him for burial: it was like laying out a child.

The hard manual work, the dreadful shortage of food, the lack of all comforts and the ever hovering shadow of death did not destroy their morale. It got very near to it, as it was meant to. More ragged and more emaciated each day, these skeletons moved about behind the wire. We did what we could, but we had not much to give ourselves. We too were getting emaciated. Ever decreasing in numbers, they kept up their macabre jokes and their obscene language.

In peace time the bugle is a most reviled instrument; here, in our camps it brought us memories of our own land. In the dark mornings reveille, then the calls of the day, "parade", "cook house", "sick parade", etc., but we turned in to "first post", "last post" and "lights out".

In the soldiers' camp was "Mrs Harris" (the secret radio). There were so many tales going around that when it was first rumoured that some were genuinely obtained by wireless I am afraid that I was sceptical and coined the name. This venerable old lady supplied us with the only accurate news we ever got. It is true that she worked in spasms, and for security reasons it was not always advisable to admit that she was working at all. When batteries and the electric current failed she was run by a wonderful arrangement of manual, or rather pedal arrangement. The set, which was of course home-made, was concealed from the Japanese in a most ingenious manner - actually under a lighted fire-place - and although they suspected something of the sort, the enemy never discovered it. It worked little during the last year and we had practically no knowledge of the landing in France and certainly none of the capitulation of Germany. The men who operated this set and the men who published the news took their lives into their own hands. The Japanese would have made short work of them.

Charges Against Camp Inmates

In 1944, nine of our camp were taken out by the Japanese on a charge of attempting to communicate with local inhabitants. They were all sent up to North Borneo to serve sentences there. Five were tied to rubber trees and shot; four died in gaol. (Those shot included the Chief Secretary of Sarawak, Mr. C. D. Le Gros Clarke.)

The terror of everyone was the *Kempeitai* (secret police) which, I suppose, could be compared with the German *Gestapo*. Apparently it was independent of the local Military Command. Anyway Colonel Suga, the camp Commandant, seemed to be quite powerless so far as they were concerned. They could come into the camps, question us, and take us away for an indefinite time. Enquiries from Suga confirmed the fact that he could do nothing about it.

They were a particularly brutal lot and I rather think that the Japanese hated them as much as we did. They had a habit of searching camps, and it was galling to lose trivial articles from one's minute possessions. They were mad on paper or anything written - poker scores, bridge scores, the cooks' accounts and all that fell into their suspicious hands. On one occasion, I found it hard to explain that some really awful doggerel which I had scribbled on a soap wrapper was only an attempt at poetry and not part of a cipher message from South East Asia Command.

Taken in by the Kempeitai

Along with others, I was once put in the *Kempeitai* for four days. It was a specially prepared prison in the town in Jawa Road. Actually, it was a row of small semi-dark cells opening on to a back yard. The whole of the front of each cell was barred like a beast's cage in a menagerie, except that the door was like that of a dog kennel. You had to bend double to get inside, which gave the gaolers a heaven-sent opportunity of kicking you hard on the behind every time you did so. I shared my cell with a Malay clerk, a Melanau sailor and a Chinese coffin maker. The clerk was accused of burglary of a Japanese Army store; the sailor of broaching a cargo of rice to appease the hunger of his family; and the coffin maker of being in possession of screws and nails for which he could not account. They had been in this cell for many weeks and had no idea when their cases were going to be heard. They had only the haziest idea what it was all about. Every morning one or more of them was taken to an upstairs room and beaten. There was nothing at all in the cell except a hole in the floor. The receptacle underneath had not been emptied, so my cell-mates told me, for seven days. I had reason to believe them. Three times a day, a very small bowl of rice and a few stringy beans were shoved through a trap-door in the front bars and we were told to hurry up about it. If you wanted drinking water you had to ask for it, and most of the guards pretended not to understand. Once a day we were allowed to go to a tap outside and bathe, but as we had no soap, no towel and no clothes except what we stood up in, it was not much use, especially as it was very cold at night sleeping on the floor without a covering. During the daytime we were not allowed to lean against the wall or lie down.

Luckily, I spent most of my mornings being interviewed by the secret police officials in their offices. Hour after hour I answered their endless questions. There is no doubt that they did all they could to catch me out. A similar question would be asked in a slightly different way an hour afterwards, or perhaps exactly the same question. They relied on weaknesses to trip you up.

Chief Inquisitor

The chief Inquisitor was a most unpleasant person. Dozens and dozens of times he told me through the interpreter that I was a liar. He tried hard to get me to say that the Rajah was a libertine and the Ranee a woman of ill fame. What this had to do with the progress of the war, I cannot say, except that it is possible that it was an attempt to get something for English-speaking *Tokyo Times* purporting to come from

someone in authority. Although, why wait for me to say so? They had nothing else to do but put it in themselves.

The interpreter was a curious person. He spoke with a strong American accent. He told he that he had worked for American firms in China, Siam and Manchuria. During one of the intervals (we had three to four hours stretch a day with half an hours interval in the middle for the inquisitors to slip out and have a drink) this interpreter was left to guard me. He became almost human and admitted that he wished the war would come to an end as he felt uneasy about his young wife in Japan.

I left my three mates still squatting in that stinking cell, still being called out at intervals for caning, and still waiting and waiting for their cases to be heard. The Japanese seldom prosecute until there is a confession, so the date set down for hearing depended on the bodily endurance of the accused. When I was about to be taken back to the camp, I noticed a row of frightened-looking women hanging about the entrance hall, closely watched by the Japanese guards. These were the wives and relatives of the prisoners bringing little baskets of food for their menfolk. Had it not been for these poor offerings they would have been very hungry indeed. My cell mates insisted on giving me a share of their food - I had none - an act of generosity for which I am deeply grateful. In time of adversity the colour of one's skin is a detail not worth thinking about.

Extraordinary Sight and Misplaced Sanctimoniousness

One thing struck me as extraordinary. On my way back to the camp, I was taken near the main block of Government offices just as the clerks were leaving for their midday meal. Out of the various offices streamed a horde of painted and begowned Japanese stenographers and secretaries or, as I believe they are sometimes nicely referred to, "tea-girls". Clutching enormous handbags and dabbing their faces with the contents, these high-heeled, pigeon toed little females chatteringly trotted back for their lunch.

One thing that Colonel Suga was sanctimonious about was Divine Service. It was evident that he had some ideas on the subject and he was not adverse to quoting Almighty God on occasions. He made a great point of the magnanimity (he loved this word and always stuttered over it) of the Japanese in general over this point, and himself in particular. He rather upset some of the Protestants by a definite bias towards the Roman Catholics. He was a frequent attendant at our funerals, and made his officers go too. There they did a lot of "saluting the glorious dead" and generally sent a wreath made at his orders by the women's camp to which were attached cards with the Japanese for "deepest sympathy" and other valedictory messages in large letters. We felt that the presence of these gentlemen was not required; it would have been more graceful, we thought, if they had attempted to prevent the funerals at all.

Freedom in Sight

Palm Sunday; the 25th March 1945. A bright sunny morning of very light blue skies and little blobs of fleecy clouds. It was the usual "make and mend day". Internees were having their weekly shaves and hair cuts; little parties were trying to play bridge with greasy, dog-eared cards at which one had to look closely to distinguish the hearts from the diamonds. Some were repairing gardening tools, mending clothes or washing bandages. I, myself, was engaged in preparing vegetable for the big meal of the week; that is to say, I was picking stalks off sweet potato leaves. There were groups sitting around smoking ersatz tobacco and talking of the war. The probabilities of release were a constant topic, but three years had worn most of the theories rather threadbare. For all we knew release was one, two, five years ahead. But most of the thoughts were on the Sunday lunch. You see how low we had sunk; man is ever the servant of his stomach,

The time is eleven o-clock. How slow the hours go by before the longed for shout of "makan up", which is 'come and get it". There is a whining of plane engines in the sky. We do not even look upwards. It is probably only "Whistling Lizzie", the old Japanese transport plane which flies between here and the North like an excursion train, or one of those Japanese fighters which fly round now and again, or an old bomber. The Japanese are masters of the skies here; it is many years since we saw a friendly aircraft.

Suddenly there is a shout - a fusillade of questions and exclamations. "My God, they're ours!" Overhead, dazzlingly clear in the strong sunlight are two planes flying very high. Nothing like them had been seen before; people swore that they could pick out strange markings; certainly not the abominable poached egg of Japan.

XVI

Freedom in Sight

The Japanese guards rushed about and we were pushed into our huts. The planes flew on and disappeared. Dinner that day lost much of its attraction. Had the tide turned at last? We could hardly believe it. Our tongues wagged far into the night.

The next morning was fine and eagerly we waited to see if more planes would come. The hours wore on and we began to lose heart. Then, just on two o'clock we heard an ever increasing roar. The Japanese herded us into shallow trenches. Mid shouts of "here they come", they flew over us, very low. There were six flights of six planes each. On they came, perfectly spaced, flight by flight. From two planes of the last flight, black specks seemed to spurt out of their tails and, falling, broke up into hundreds of little fluttering leaves. They took a long time to come down and appeared and disappeared through the layers of low cloud. None of these leaflets

dropped in our Camp, but the wind was taking them over large parts of the neighbouring country.

Air Raids

This was the beginning of the end. From then onwards more than a hundred raids were made. The Allied objectives were, of course, the landing ground three miles away and the river and shipping in town. Sometimes every day, sometimes twice a day and sometimes at intervals of days, the Allied planes came.

Bombs, cannon and machine guns, they just arrived when they liked and went when they liked. In all that time only once did I see a Japanese plane attempt to fight.

Like many of their arrangements, the Japanese air raid precautions went all wrong. Their complicated system of different coloured flags and bells and gongs never did work. In any case our shallow trenches were a farce as most of us poked our heads above to look at the fun. It was obvious from the start that the Allied planes knew exactly where we were. Still, this hopping in and out of trenches was a nuisance as raids frequently occurred just on meal time. In the end the Japanese gave up all ideas of air raid precautions and we were left in our huts during raids "at our own risk" as the Japanese reminded us.

These raids interrupted our working parties but we were not sorry for that. At the sound of approaching planes the Japanese guards used to hurry us into neighbouring rubber gardens where we were supposed to hide. Clouds of smoke now and again indicated hits and at times the ground reverberated with the reports of bombs. The Japanese very occasionally let off a small calibre gun or two but I never saw any of our planes hit. There was, however, a wooden constructed Mosquito reconnaissance plane which flew too low and hit the top of a durian tree a little way down river from Kuching. The private possessions of the two occupants such as letters and photographs of their wives together with parts of the wooden structure were exhibited at the Sarawak Steamship Co. Ltd. offices in Khoo Hun Yeang Street with Japanese propaganda notices saying that the wooden structure of the plane proved that the Allies had run out of metal.

Rumours

Just before the end rather horrible rumours began to get around. People said there was to be another death march. Those who were just physically able to do so were to accompany the retreating Japanese Forces as carriers, and those who were either too old or too weak were to be exterminated. The same end was predicted for the women and children. These rumours had at least some truth as we were called out in alphabetical order to be questioned. There were, of course, the usual silly ones. "What was the name of your school?" "Did you graduate at a University?" " Are any of your brothers in the Army?" But it seemed to us that the most important one was the state of our health. "Had you any illness in Camp?" "What was our present health like?" People who jump to conclusions said that this was putting us into categories; Category A, those who would be taken with the retreating Japanese and

left to die as we fell under our loads (some of the pessimists said bayoneted) and Category B, those who were to be eliminated by the machine guns which had always been trained on our Camp. I do not think many of us worried much. All these horrible rumours did not concern us half as much as what we were going to have for our next meal. The fear of death is common to us all, but an empty stomach tends to make one take little heed of the morrow.

In a way we were buried alive. During the whole of our three and a half years' captivity we were only allowed to send five post-cards. Only three arrived. One, we know was lost in transit and one probably never left Singapore.

As an example of the strict censorship of these post-cards, as a condition of being allowed to send them at all a certain percentage of us were obliged to include one of the following sentences on our card.

"Borneo is a land of perpetual Summer, full of natural beauty, with plenty of bananas, papayas, pineapples, mangosteens and coconuts".

"Nothing is lacking in this Camp and we are satisfied with our life here".

"All officials in the Camp are kind and generous so that there is no need for you to worry about me".

"This Camp is a natural flower garden and how happy I should be if you were here".

And a few more in similar vein. Some of us tried to evade this by putting one of the sentences in inverted commas, whilst others put in bits about telling it to the marines and grandmothers. The Japanese spotted this and acted according to their usual habits.

Letters

As for letters received, we only got two batches, both in the middle of 1944. Most were dated 1942 or 1943. The joy of receiving them was tempered with sadness; some of the longed-for news was of tragedy and death.

When the end came, it came quickly. In the second week of August, 1945, stories began to circulate that something big had happened. On the 16th or it may have been the 17th, our Camp Master gave out that there was important news. "Mrs Harris" (the secret radio) had come up to scratch; she had received the news that Japan had capitulated on the 15th.

The next day the Camp Master tackled Colonel Suga, showed him a leaflet which had been pitched into us from outside, and said that it would be better if the Japanese would let us know the truth. Colonel Suga then admitted that the surrender was true, but added that the Armies in Borneo had not surrendered and were undefeated; he could not say what their attitude would be. The Army, he said, was fully armed and he was apprehensive; anything, he added, might happen.

After this many things did happen. We were still under Japanese discipline, but this began to wear off. Allied planes now flew over us low demanding particulars from the Japanese of numbers and state of the prisoners.

One day, dropping of food and clothes started. First came long flights of fighters, just to see there was no funny business. Then a Douglas arrived and down came the parachutes. Our first meal was a slice of bread, a dab of cheese; hardly a banquet but balm for our misused insides. Then came tobacco and cigarettes and bully beef; shirts and trousers; bandages, medical supplies and newspapers.

We visited each other's camps and saw with our own eyes the ravages of the three and a half years. The Union Jack was hoisted; the Japanese flag was hauled down.

Leaflets

On the 9th we were told by dropped leaflets that unless negotiations broke down the Allied Forces would arrive on the 11th. On that morning rumours came in that the Allied ships were at the mouth of the river and that the Japanese Commander had gone down to sign the capitulation. The hours dragged on. At three o'clock I went along to the wire at the back of the soldiers' camp to receive a Sarawak flag which some Chinese friends had promised to bring. I met them, and on my way back through the military camp found it deserted. The only man I could see was an Australian Military Policeman near the entrance. "What's the matter?" I said. "Where are all the chaps?" In very colourful language he told me to hurry up as the *** Allies had come. Bundling the flag under my arm I ran out of the Camp up the road, or tottered would be a better word as my legs were wobbling. Arriving panting and dizzy at the central square I saw hundreds of British, Dutch, Indian and Indonesian prisoners and internees drawn up in loose ranks in front of a rough platform on which were standing a British Brigadier, Staff Officers, a U.S.A. Naval Captain and others. Long, lanky Australian infantrymen stood around with tommy guns. As I got there I heard the Brigadier shout "You are now free!" A great cheer went up from the ragged crowd. Australian soldiers marched the Japanese prisoners off. We saw Colonel Suga locked up in a room in his own office. Apparently he demurred about giving up his sword but thought better of it when threatened with the point of bayonet.

Allied Officers came into our Camp and we heard the news of three and a half years; the butchery of men, women and children at Long Nawang and the loss of many of our friends. (A party of about twenty Europeans, including men, women and children, escaped from Sibu on the approach of the Japanese Forces and arrived in Long Nawang, Dutch Borneo, too late to be evacuated. A few months later their presence was betrayed to some Japanese who massacred the whole lot).

Flag Up

That evening we procured a long bamboo pole and hoisted the Sarawak flag in our Camp.

The next morning the official photographers arrived and I had the honour of hoisting the flag officially. Later on a combined thanksgiving service was held in the big square.

The breaking up of the Camp was quick and methodical - by air and by sea. British and American craft removed the released prisoners to Labuan where hospitals and attention awaited them. I was not among these as I volunteered to stay.

Before the break-up, the 9th Australian Division Commander flew from Labuan. The Union Jack was hoisted and the General addressed the whole of us on parade. Guards of honour were furnished by British and Indian personnel, who only yesterday had been prisoners of war. Special cheers were given for the Indian guard, whose loyalty and astounding pluck during the years of captivity were a highlight of the imprisonment. Subjected to cruelty after cruelty by the Japanese in their endeavours to undermine their loyalty to the King, they resolutely refused to betray their oath of allegiance. I shall always remember with gladness and pride the indomitable courage of that small band of His Majesty's Indian Army.

XVII

Freedom at Last

My own movements after this were varied. I went into one of the Malay parts of the town as my own house, lately a Japanese machine-gun post and a sort of central staff headquarters, was now occupied by a company of an Australian battalion. My reception by the people was touching; people stopping and throwing yellow rice over my head, and old ladies weeping and hugging my legs. I did not pretend that it was entirely the joy of seeing me; rather it was relief at being freed of Japanese domination. Perhaps I may be allowed to think that just a little was genuine pleasure at meeting an old acquaintance again. I know that I felt a real affection for the people who had undergone such misery for the past three and a half years. They looked thin, ragged and haggard; some of the little children had old-looking shrunken faces from under feeding. Shouts greeted me as I trudged along with my few belongings in a haversack and my feet in the remains of what was once a pair of shoes. I arrived at the Malay house which had been prepared for me, accompanied by a following of little girls and boys running around me; their parents whispered kindly words of welcome in my ears and nearly shook my hand off.

This hysterical reaction has, of course, long passed off, but I still felt proud, and still do, that our degradation had not moved the people to forget us. This is an opportunity, that is, if they ever see these lines, to express my gratitude to those of Kuching of all races and of all ages, who made it possible for me to exist in those early days after I left the Camp. I had volunteered to stay; it was nobody's business to look after me. Later, as I shall show, matters settled themselves but during those days I lived and rested by the goodwill and affection of the people, whom the British Government had failed to save from invasion. The relieving Forces were Australians from their 9th Division, but the Naval units were mainly American. However, the surrender at Pending was signed in an Australian man-of-war.

The British Administration

With the relieving forces came the British Military Administration Unit, then known by the cryptic name of B.B.C.A.U. (British Borneo Civil Affairs Unit), but generally called rather rudely "B. Cow." This is certainly not the place to discuss the merits or otherwise of this Unit. It has been called uncommonly hard names, and on the whole it can be severely criticised. I can only speak of what actually I saw and heard myself; I am inclined to think that the faults, if any, originated in its headquarters in London or in Melbourne, Australia. Attempts had obviously been made to enlist officers who had good local knowledge and experience. This was not easy as many of the Sarawak and North Borneo Europeans were either interned, still in the fighting forces or dead, but a good number of Sarawak Officers, released from the Military services elsewhere, were not only on the spot when the relief came, but had already in some cases been in these parts for some time waiting for the actual entry into Kuching. These men were of course, invaluable. Not only had they helped to provide the mysterious and romantic S.R.D. (Services Reconnaissance Detachment) Force, but had planned the dull but absolutely necessary details for quick and effective work in relieving immediately the wants of the civil population.

We, in the Camp, did not know, of course, that as far back as June, 1945, Sarawak Officers were in Labuan, and before this dropping into the interior of the State. In order to make up numbers, other men were commissioned in this Unit who, in my opinion, were unsuitable for the job. A good fighting soldier does not necessarily make a good Civil Affairs Officer, nor is it possible for strangers to these countries to learn enough of the language or customs to be of any use in a few weeks. As I was closely connected with the Unit, in fact I was attached to it, I did realise the difficulties of overcoming the strange ways of far-away headquarters. The direction of this Unit from Labuan was often cumbersome. The military way of doing things, especially on paper, led to much confusion when ex-civil servants tried their hand at it. There were splendid individual officers among these strangers, men who worked hard and zealously, but on the whole it seemed to me to be an ill-balanced Unit. The galaxy of British Military Authority Brigadiers, Colonels, Lieut. Colonels, and Majors (hardly any were under that rank) and all its attendant military phrases and customs did tend to confuse the people. It seemed ridiculous, for instance, to put a man with a Ship's Captain's Certificate into an army Major's uniform and tell him to be Harbour Master. Many members of this Unit were civilians who had seen no military service but nevertheless they arrived covered in crowns and pips. I suppose there was a good reason for this militarium but at times it was farcical and led to petty jealousies and scrambles for another pip or a red tab.

Having started almost from scratch, the British Military Authority had the important task of filling the gap between September 1945 and April 1946. I would like to mention here the names of two men without whose sympathy, tact and understanding it would not have been possible to hand over to civil government so early. They were Brigadier T. C. Eastwick, Force Commander of the troops who relieved Kuching, and Colonel H. H. Goss who became senior British Military Authority Officer in Sarawak. Brigadier Eastwick's name will be remembered long in

Sarawak - a different kind of man might so easily have caused political complications. Colonel Goss remained until civil Government came in; a good man in a very difficult job. The Sarawak Officers who were available and others with local experience saved the day; their zeal and aptitude was taken for granted, but the people knew.

My New Job

The first sight of Kuching after release was appalling. The people were starving, half naked and full of disease. Out of this muddle some order had to be brought so I became Political Adviser to the British Military Administration. The main trouble was, of course, the general idea that once the Japanese had been defeated everything was going to be easy. On the other hand, an era of liberty, leisure and loot and for some, a "golden age" had begun. In addition to those who sold the dreadful local brands of spirits, there were others who obtained Army stores by peculiar means to sell at five hundred per cent profit.

At first, I was given the Sarawak Museum office and became involved in listening to all sorts of requests and appeals. One of my duties was trying to collect what I could of the Rajah's property. Strangely enough, the Japanese had done no damage to the Astana, and its contents were almost intact but scattered. For instance, I managed to find the Rajah's insignia, the State Sword and other relics. The Museum lost very little; this was because the Japanese official in charge of it for the last two years was, it is said, an Oxford University graduate.

Troops and the People

The Australian troops made friends with the people, especially with the girls. A soldier has to walk out with someone, whatever the climate. They exchanged hats and did a little flirting in the accepted manner. However, it was unfortunate but inevitable that some of the locals went right off the deep end. Many people of both sexes, especially the young, learnt seriously to drink. The reasons for this were obvious. After being bottled up for so many years, the sudden feeling of liberty caused a reversal of all previous ideas. The main object of all was to eat, drink and be merry and damn the consequences. Money for the first time for years was of value, and the Australians had it. The drink sold by the newly opened bars was atrocious stuff. Until the authorities could get control, it took command and influenced the lives of many decent people. "Get-rich-quick" people started business on all sides. Freedom is invaluable, but sudden access to it is dangerous, as events clearly showed.

The relieving troops were generally very young men and most of them behaved in a manner strange to the people, accustomed to the rather more reserved attitude of Europeans in Sarawak. This was an eye-opener and led to misunderstandings. The Australians were kindly and friendly, and if there was any colour-bar feeling, it was hard to detect. One thing that astonished them was the aptitude of the local girls for dancing. There were a few who did know something about it before the war, but the rest took to it like ducks to the water. Lanky six foot soldiers slithered about in

enormous army boots and tightly clasped bepowdered little Chinese girls of only about four feet tall.

Japanese Prisoners

The Japanese prisoners, or as they were more correctly named, "surrendered personnel", were now behind the barbed wire instead of us. There were about eight thousand of them and they were a very submissive lot. All their previous behaviour had disappeared and they scrambled to salute and bow on all occasions. I visited our late Camp and it was difficult not to feel aggrieved at the good treatment they were receiving compared to what we had received at their hands. A lunch of fried rice, fish, vegetable and dried fruit was shown to me. This, I was told, was just an ordinary sample.

Collaborators

All the world over people disagree about collaborators. There were a few in Sarawak, and in the first few days some of these gentlemen came in for rough handling. I don't blame the people for getting tough, but unfortunately most of the really bad ones got off. Several local women were great offenders. These women, no longer young, obtained many privileges by being friendly with the Japanese officers. However, in most cases it was probably merely a way of getting sufficient food for themselves and, perhaps, to safeguard them from the ill attentions of the *Kempeitai* (Secret Police).

The real collaborators were men who deliberately joined forces with the enemy and informed on their friends. They were permitted to retain most of their property, they never suffered privation and, in some cases, added to their possessions. Through tale-bearing, their friends and other loyal persons were tortured, persecuted and killed.

Owing to legal difficulties and for other reasons which would be difficult to explain here the majority of them were never tried and punished.

Everything Changed Round

It appeared as if the Japanese must have deliberately altered everything the other way round. The Chief Secretary's Office became a gaol with a pig-sty outside. The Anglican Cathedral was a store. A Catholic School was a Court House and the Sarawak Club bowling alley was turned into a shrine. Machinery was changed round from works to works; from ship to ship; and from motor vehicle to motor vehicle.

There appeared to have been a particular hate against books or papers written in English, and photographs and pictures of Europeans which were all confiscated and destroyed under threat of severe penalties. Gramophone records were also broken in dozens.

XVIII

The Rajah Returns

The weeks before the Rajah's arrival were more than hectic; they were tumultuous. I was in the odd position of being Chief Adviser to the Military Administration and of having been formerly the Chief of the Civil Administration. I must say that we got on very well together, although the way soldiers did things amazed my civilian mind, but then I have always been suspicious of bureaucratic methods and red tape. It was often a case of the people on the spot being hampered by the people sitting many hundreds of miles away issuing unworkable orders.

We did our best to brighten up Kuching for the Rajah's arrival. Although I had quite a lot to do with it, I was surprised myself on the bright sunny morning when we left for Pending to meet the Sunderland flying-boat. The river was a mass of gaily decorated boats and the villages were alive with people cheering and waving any odd piece of coloured cloth they could get hold of.

On Time

The flying-boat arrived on time and out stepped the Rajah and Ranee; and out stepped too another party of very welcome Sarawak Civil Servants who had forgone their much needed leave after a prison camp to come and help out. Two Colonial Office men were also in the party, one in administration and the other to disentangle the legal skeins of local affairs. In addition we had the assistance of two Members of Parliament, Captain Gammons and Colonel Rees-Williams. In this account I have tried hard not to throw bouquets, as so many were responsible for the great change-over and its attendant difficulties. I think, however, all who were there will agree that Sarawak was lucky to get four men of vision, imagination and sympathy; not to speak of great ability. Mr. Dawson who became later the first Acting Governor of Sarawak, and Mr. Dale, who had a great legal reputation in the Colonial Office, dealt with involved legal problems and put us on the right path in a manner which belies the supposition that good lawyers are pawky, peevish and devoid of humour. I must say the Members of Parliament gave me a surprise. To look at them I should have put my money on Gammons being the Labour man and Rees-Williams the Conservative. However, they appeared to have taken a holiday from party politics here and travelled round amicably together; their conclusions were made public to the House of Parliament.

We embarked on the launch at Pending and set sail for Kuching, a bit under half an hour away. We might have gone by road, a quarter of an hour, but the Rajahs of Sarawak have never entered their capital so. It has been the custom to approach it by water. More romantic, you will agree, than a dull, dusty road and a bone-shaking ex-Japanese car.

Gun Salute

As we came in sight of Port Margherita a salute of guns (actually grenades) started and hundreds of little boats put out from the river banks to escort the launch to the landing steps. The old clock tower on the Government Offices stood up there waiting for the Rajah's flag to be broken on top of its roof; the clock did not work, the Japanese had seen to that, but the tower was there to remind the Rajah of its right and privilege of sheltering him on great occasions.

Ashore there were guards of honour of the Royal Navy, Punjab Regiment and Sarawak Constabulary. The flag which had flown over the Rajah at the centenary Celebrations - it seemed so long ago now - had been concealed all the years of the Japanese occupation and now flew boldly once more. Loyal addresses were presented to their Highnesses, who were taken over to the Astana. The Rajah spoke of the little changes which had taken place there.

The lawns were again expanses of short mown grass; the bamboo hedges, the cannas and the flowering trees adorned the picture; the old tower at the entrance from which the Japanese had ripped the creepers in defiance of tradition stood mouldering but serene. We had seen to it that the Astana, at least, should welcome back its inhabitants in all its former dignity and charm. I am afraid, however, that we were not altogether free of window dressing as many parts of the town were still in the dilapidated state which we had inherited from the Japanese.

And so after four and a half years absence the third Rajah came into his own again. The dark shadow of Cession or, as some called it, abdication was not allowed to cast a gloom over the memorable homecoming.

Affected

The Rajah was, I think, affected by the great reception and by the efforts which his people had made to rejoice. I know that the Ranee was; as she stood by me on the foredeck of the launch I noticed that she was crying. We all felt a bit lumpy in our throats. The festivities later, the progress round the town, and the reception, were just an anti-climax.

I have forgotten to say that just before we landed in Kuching the Rajah asked me once again to be his Chief Secretary and organise a Civil Government right away; tomorrow in fact - they say that there is no rest for the wicked.

Thus on the 15th April, 1946, I took over the State from the British Military Administration. Later, when I was leading a more leisurely life, I found it difficult to believe that we did such a lot in such a little time. We were working with a skeleton staff as the British Military Authority Officers were being returned to Labuan and demobilised. The Japanese had used most of the Secretariat files for wrapping paper or stuffing up holes in the cement drains and there was an acute shortage of office materials.

The arrival of the Rajah and the restoration of Civil Government was a signal for all sorts of people to push their claims and beg for concessions. There was a constant flow of informers against persons accused of collaboration with the enemy. It was one job to listen to their stories but quite another to get them into the witness box. It may have been a relic of Japanese administration, but these complainants and their so-called witnesses would not come into Court.

Then there were the people who wanted concession and monopolies; the man who said that he had obtained fifty gallons of a hundred per cent pure alcohol, and if we gave him the monopoly he could break it down into enough liquor to keep the whole garrison going for three months. Several Australians tried some of his weaker brew on the sly, and the hospital was the result.

Nightmare

Old feuds were reopened in the Courts and the currency question was a nightmare. At the end of the war a one dollar Japanese "banana" note was worth about a cent in our money. Persons who were under suspicion of collaboration had packing cases and trunks full of them. Squabbles over money transactions during the occupation sprang up. "What was the value of a 'banana' dollar in 1943?" "Was the transfer of a rubber garden in 1945 for twenty thousand dollars fair, even if the money only went as far as buying a sack of rice?"

Then there were the people who had bought up motor vehicles and other machinery from the Japanese during their last few weeks. I think it served them right when they lost their money and their vehicles too. For instance, a motor car would have its own chassis and a body and engine taken from other cars. One man even swore that he bought the Kuching Power Station from the Japanese. Black market activities were in full swing and dozens of little boys and girls sold a miscellaneous assortment of articles which were obviously at some time looted. The Government clerks and other employees wanted their back pay; food was scarce and cigarettes scarcer; and most of the people were literally in rags.

Reports came from the outstations. Fort Burdett (named after the famous Baroness Burdett-Coutts, friend and benefactor of the first Rajah), Fort Keppel (named after another helper of old Sarawak), the old frontier Fort at Lubok Antu, the Forts at Kapit and Song had all gone. Two bazaars had been destroyed by fire, and five more by aerial attack.

Numbers of schools were standing but the Japanese had removed or destroyed all the books. Bits of the big Cathedral bible arrived in our late camp in the form of wrappers.

The Australian solders had now left and this caused much sadness among the local girls. Nevertheless, that did not stop the dancing rage.

Sorting out

Gradually things sorted themselves out; but the sorting out was a bigger job than I had imagined. The chief concerns were, of course. the proposed Cession, rehabilitation and food. Luckily the Dayaks gave very little trouble. Their sensible attitude at this critical time deserves full mention; it is a pity that some others did not follow suit. For instance, it was irritating to receive requests to start racing and holding regattas.

It is, indeed, true that the time allotted to us for disseminating the question of Cession, and preparing for the Council was short, but a tremendous amount can be done by experienced Administrative Officers; luckily we had a few, including one 'dug out' (Mr C. D. Adams) whose appearance alone inspired confidence among the Dayaks of the mighty Rejang area, and every effort was made to tell the people what it was all about. In the press, by telegram, in circulars and by word of mouth the situation was explained in English, Malay, Dayak and Chinese.

The stage was now set for the final act. The Tuan Muda, the Rajah's younger brother, followed him out from England and was in Kuching for the meeting of the Council Negri which was opened on the 15th May 1946. The two brothers did not meet each other.

XIX

Cession

The proposal to cede Sarawak to Great Britain was no new thing. There were times when cession to Belgium or France was seriously discussed. The Brookes never imagined a millionaire White Rajah. The first Rajah said so and so did the second. The third Rajah also always said so.

Previous discussion regarding cession had already taken place years before the invasion of Sarawak by the Japanese. For obvious reasons, and because nothing came of the scheme, this was not made public. In any case, the great point to remember is that whatever His Majesty's Government thought, and whatever His Highness the Rajah wanted to do, there could be no fair dealing until the proposal had been put to the people themselves. The days of forcible seizure of territories were over; Sarawak had to decide for itself.

Inevitable Climax

It was the inevitable climax to a hundred and four years of semi-independence, the backwash of two great wars and an enemy occupation. There has always been a certain amount of glamour and romance about Sarawak but I could never see people getting excited over British North Borneo (now Sabah).

Almost immediately after Sarawak's release from the Japanese, the Rajah told his people that he had re-opened the matter of cession with His Majesty's Government, and that, subject to their wishes, he had offered to cede the State to his Majesty who had graciously accepted. The Rajah sent personal messages to his people, advising them to rely on him as their spokesman and representative.

The memorable meeting of the Council Negri was opened on 15th May, 1946. In his short speech the Rajah, opening the Council, said, " . . . since I had the pleasure of addressing you last, the Freedom-loving peoples of the World have been forced to fight the greatest and most savage war in their history to retain their Birthright. The changes which such a war inevitably bring must be clear to all of you even in Sarawak." " . . . the most important item on the agenda is the Bill for the Cession of the Rajah to His Britannic Majesty. I have come to this grave decision after long and careful thought, convinced that in Cession lies the future happiness and prosperity of Sarawak. I do not propose to enlarge on the matter further here. My reasons have been fully ventilated in the Press and elsewhere, but I would draw your attention to the Statement of the Secretary of State which appeared in the local press of yesterday. This statement should have resolved any doubts which you may have had as to the future policy in regard to Sarawak in the event of its becoming a British Colony . . .".

Proper Preference

I have quoted from this speech in order to make it clear that the question of cession was properly referred to the Council, and of course the Rajah was not present at the debate. This is not a Government document, nor do I wish to be acrimonious, but hints that certain members of the Council were "got at" just before the meeting, and that I, as President, told Native Government Members before they went in that I expected them to vote for cession are utter nonsense. The public heard what I said at the Council Negri.

Well, the Council lasted three days. There were, it is true, other Bills, but these although important became obscured by the Cession Bill. Every member had a chance to talk, and in any language he liked. His Highness the Tuan Muda was invited to address the Council although he was not a member. He made a dignified speech and was not questioned. The end is common knowledge. The third reading resulted in the Council voting for Cession by a small majority.

Little Interest

Contrary to stories people heard elsewhere the public appeared to take little interest in the proceedings. The public gallery was almost empty and there were no crowds outside. I read somewhere or other that the result was received with intense gloom and depression, that hush pervaded the town, that the people knew then that they had lost their birthright. Personally, I saw or heard nothing of this, and in fact I admit to being a trifle disappointed.

The rest of the Cession story is just routine. The Cession Bill was confirmed by the Rajah-in-Council, and on the 21st May, 1946, the Rajah signed an instrument ceding Sarawak to the British Crown. This was made effective by Order-in-Council on 1st July, from which date Sarawak became a Crown Colony.

The Rajah and the Ranee left soon after the signing of the instrument. At their own request, public ceremonies and festivities were omitted. I feel sure that this was the right attitude to take. The Rajah had never liked a lot of show, and the present situation did not call for it. The Tuan Muda had left for England earlier, the relations with his brother still strained: back too went the two Members of Parliament and my friend Mr. Dale the lawyer.

Exacting Times

It was by no means all over bar the shouting. Until the British Crown took over I still administered the Government; perhaps the most exacting time of the lot. It was a fact, however, that the more you tried to spring clean the more the defects and damages showed up; four and a half years of occupation and British Military Administration had left its mark. So many things to be wound up; things that were quite out of the line of the incoming Colonial Office. I rather suspect that they were shocked at our methods. I had to conquer an inclination to get certain things done before we put up the shutters. It is best to be truthful, and I knew, and others knew, that the ways of the Sarawak Government were not always those of the Secretary of State; hence a last minute dash by all sorts of people to get in while the going was good. It required a stony heart to fend off the suppliants.

The English papers were full of stories of the Cession, and there was quite a bombardment of telegrams and letters. One unknown gentleman regularly sent me envelopes full of newspaper cuttings; another sent me threatening letters containing neither grammar nor truth. I even had a vitriolic letter from a very charming lady.

Take-Over

The 1st of July was to be Cession Day; the day on which His Majesty's Government took over its new Colony. There are times when one is thoroughly frightened, but once or twice in one's life it is real blue funk. On that unforgettable morning, I felt about a hundred per cent more frightened than I had ever been before.

On the eve of Cession I sent the following message to all Residencies and to all Departments in the State. I make no apology for its sentiment or its sadness.

> As you know, His Excellency the Governor-General of Malaya, the Right Honourable Malcolm MacDonald, will make his official landing in Kuching on 1st July, 1946, in order to take over formally the State of Sarawak on behalf of His Majesty the King, and to swear in the Honourable Mr. C. W. Dawson as Acting Governor of Sarawak.

My appointment as Officer Administering the Government will then cease. This Bill of Cession was, as you all know, passed by the Council Negri and ratified by His Highness the Rajah-in-Council. I do not propose here to enlarge on, or explain, many statements which have appeared in the press and elsewhere concerning Cession, except to say that it would be wise not to accept any statement as true unless it bears proper authority. The Sarawak motto, *Dum Spiro Spero,** which is so often quoted by persons opposed to Cession, might equally be applied to those in favour of Cession, or indeed to any effort to make a better world. I have had long experience of Sarawak, and I would ask you, as a last request, to cast aside all prejudices and personalities and get on with what is really the only important thing now. I mean, of course, the rehabilitation of Sarawak. So many inaccurate statements have been made that it is possible that these unfortunate internal dissensions will continue and hinder this great work. We all regret most profoundly the end of Brooke rule, but we must not let sentiment overcome our common sense.

The new Government deserves your support and if you wish to show your great respect and affection for His Highness the Rajah, the best way of doing this is to forget our bickerings and get on with the job. It is the duty of every loyal citizen to work for the good of the State. Do not disappoint His Highness by a show of selfishness and personal interests.

My Only White Suit

The morning arrived and I put on my only white suit for the occasion. Just too late I noticed a hole in the trousers, so I pinned the Star of Sarawak to my breast to show that anyhow we would go down with colours flying. Over the old clock tower again the flag was fluttering and the bands and the crowds dazzled me as I walked down the steps from the Government Offices. They had given me a young Welsh Fusilier as aide-de-camp:** I am not a short man myself, but this fellow was getting on for seven feet tall and I never felt so small in my life as I slowly came out into the open. The guns of H.M.S. *Alert* boomed out a salute as I stood stiffly to attention to hear the Sarawak Anthem played for the last time.

As I stood there in the blinding sunlight memories of the Rajahs of Sarawak, of days of festivity, of new awakening, of stirring scenes, flitted through my mind. The timid young gawk of a cadet, who had landed so hopefully thirty-five years ago, who had wandered all over the country and done so many things in so many places and with such a willing heart, had now finished. As the drums rolled and the troops presented arms, I stood there in my disgraceful suit, hiding my battered old sun

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* While I breathe I hope.

** This was Captain D. F. A. E. D Morgan.(Private correspondence with O. F. Wright, 4 September 1994.)

helmet down my side wondering if I would ever make it. Just as I was leaving my house I had sent a telegram to the Rajah. I said:

> In a few minutes I shall hand over your State to His Majesty's representative with full honours and ceremony. I have impressed upon all that the best way of showing their loyalty to you is to support the new Government fully and work for the rehabilitation of the State. As your last Officer Administering the Government I wish your Highness and Her Highness the Ranee all happiness in your new position.

I could not go back after those brave words, so I subdued my quivering lips and trembling knees and strode forward to inspect the Royal Naval and Sarawak guards of honour. Mr. Malcolm MacDonald then landed at the old stone steps where the Rajah used to arrive and I escorted him to the Court House amidst more guns and this time the British National Anthem.

The proceedings in the Court House were short and formal. The Governor-General made a charming and admirable speech. In twenty minutes it was all over, the new Acting Governor had been sworn in and departed amidst more guns and more anthems.

I put on my hat, quietly slipped through a side door, and went home.

Plate 1

J.B. Archer, 1927.

(Courtesy of Owen Wright)

Plate 2

J.B. Archer with his sisters, 1927
(Courtesy of Owen Wright)

Plate 3

J.B. Archer and his wife, Bilam, in 1946.
(Courtesy of Owen Wright)

Plate 4

A street scene outside the General Post Office in Kuching, circa 1940.
(Courtesy of Ramond Allas)

Plate 5

J.B. Archer wearing the insignia of Master of the Order of the Star of Sarawak.
(Courtesy of Owen Wright)

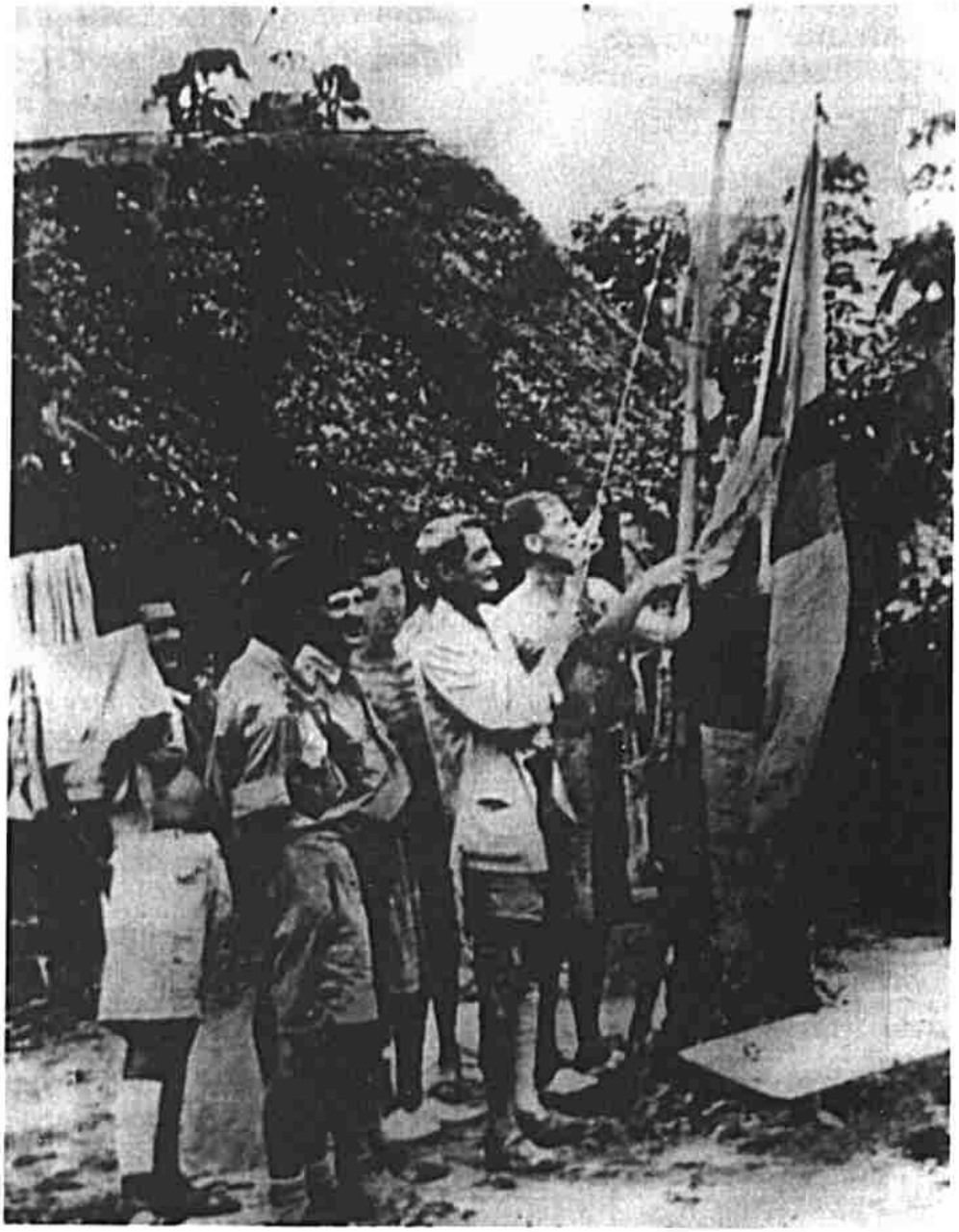

Plate 6

J.B. Archer raising the flag of Sarawak on 12 September 1945 at Batu Lintang internment camp celebrating liberation. *(Courtesy of Raymond Allas)*

Plate 7

The Residency at Simanggang, one of Archer's postings.
(Courtesy of Owen Wright)

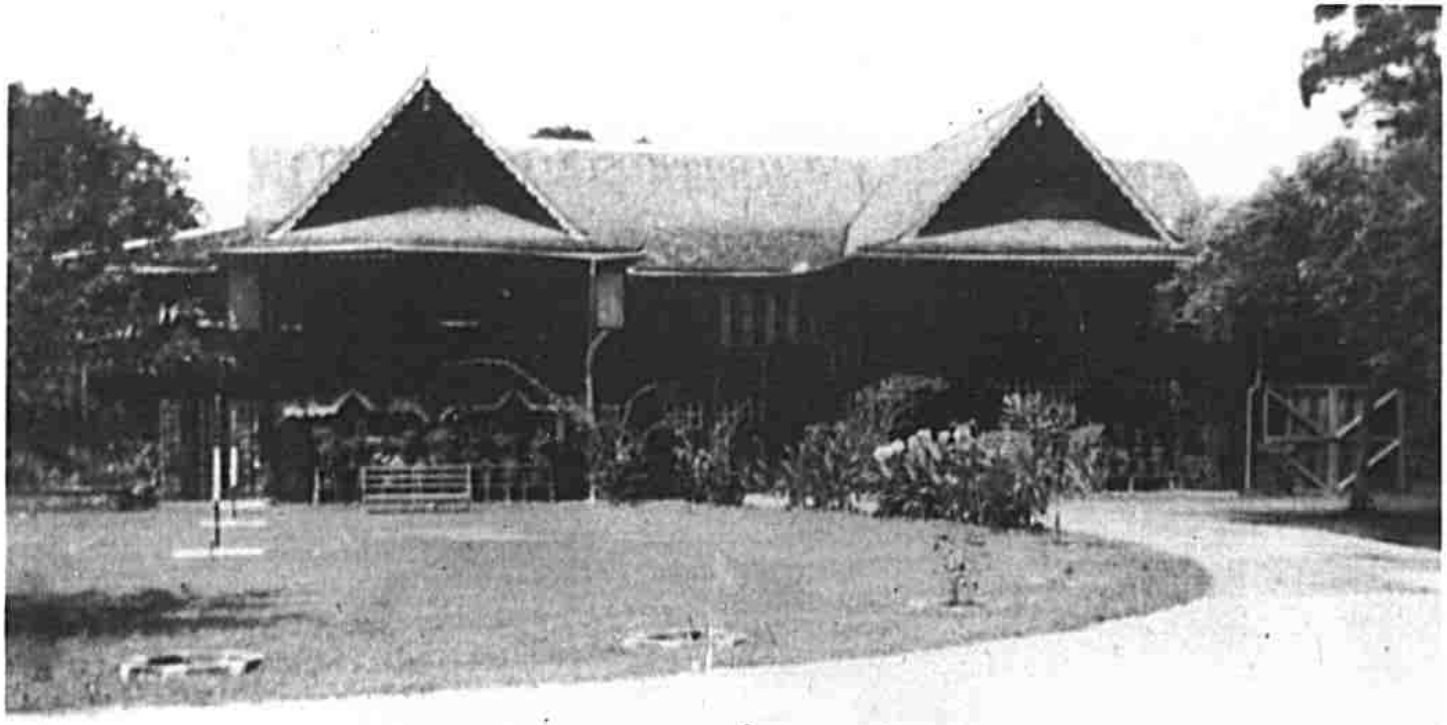

Plate 8

Hill Bungalow, Kuching, provided to J.B. Archer as a lifetime residence by the government in 1946.
(Courtesy of Owen Wright)

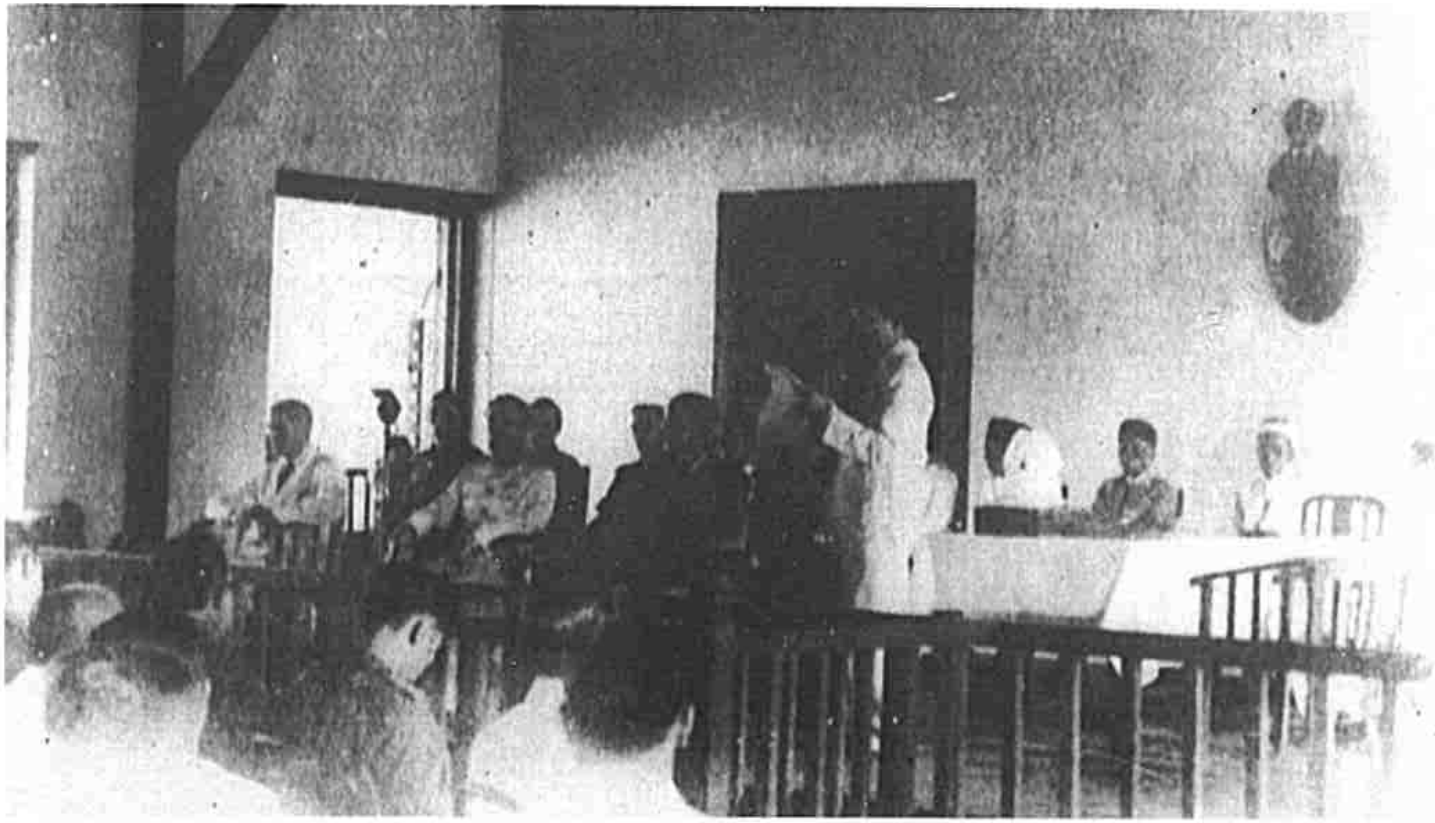

Plate 9

J.B. Archer at the Council Negri Meeting on the 15 May 1946, when the Bill to cede Sarawak to Britain was passed.
(Courtesy of Owen Wright)

Plate 10

The official signing and witnessing of the Cession Document on 21 May 1946. Seated in the front row from left to right are the Rajah, Charles Vyner Brooke; C.W. Dawson, the British Representative, and Ong Tiang Swee, the leader of Sarawak's Chinese community. J.B. Archer is standing between the Rajah and C.W. Dawson.
(Courtesy of Raymond Allas)

Plate 11

Waiting for the Governor-General to arrive for the Cession ceremony . J.B. Archer is in the centre, wearing a white suit and topee, with C.W. Dawson, the British Representative, on his left.
(Courtesy of Owen Wright)

Plate 12

Official Parade on Cession to Britain, 1 July 1946. In the front are the Governor-General Malcolm MacDonald and his Aide-de-Camp Captain B. Morgan. In the rear are J.B. Archer in a white suit and topee and the British Representative, C.W.Dawson. *(Courtesy of Owen Wright)*

Part Two

Selected Articles Written by J. B. Archer for the *Sarawak Gazette*

New Year in Sibu (1926)*

Once more to the *Optimistic Fiddler* falls the unenviable task of recording the New Year doings at Sibu without causing his unhappy readers too many yawns, and withal giving a descriptive account of the celebrations on the 2nd January and previous days. That these were quite equal to former years, and in some respects possibly better, was the opinion of all those who had the luck to be there.

As usual the football competition started early, and on every afternoon following Christmas Day teams of valiant men entered the arena of liquid mud to contend with each other before the sparkling eyes of the many charming Malay ladies who, ensconced in little wooden huts round the field, anxiously watched their menfolk slithering and sliding in the quivering morass. Indeed, the arrival and departure of these damsels afforded more entertainment than the football to many. Those, however, who were not so susceptible, thronged every point of vantage and yelled or otherwise as the fancy took them: and perhaps giving a bigger yell when the referee had his last remaining eye closed by a clod of evil-smelling mud or sat down with alarming rapidity. Most of the games were well contested, the final being played on the 2nd January. Here a Police XI (when is a "bobby" not a "bobby") beat a Kampong Nyabor team fairly easily. The losers made a bad start and appeared to lose heart, although with the state of the ground the winners were those who fell down the least number of times.

Another competition was that open to Members of the Sibu Recreation Club for billiards, 50 up, and played in the Island Club. Here the size of the table seemed to nonplus some of the players, whilst others, throwing discretion to the winds, made a bold dash at it on the "you-never-know-if-you-hit-hard-enough" system. In the final, which was played on the 2nd, Sim Ah Bee, a very steady player, proved too much for Augustus Mowe who continually found the pockets were too small. On the conclusion of the game the Acting Resident presented the winner with a silver cup given by the Regatta Fund.

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The morning of the 2nd January opened drearily - pouring rain and a doleful outlook. By eight o'clock, however, the weather had cleared and racing was started an hour late.

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* *Sarawak Gazette*, Vol. LXI No. 869, 1 February 1926, p. 31.

To avoid disappointment to those who now expect a detailed list of events and their winners it might be said at once that they are not going to get it. That method of journalism appears to be the exclusive privilege of the Kuching Regatta, and anyhow the compositors detest that sort of work.

The *Sri Bulan Perak* owned by Mr. Le Sueur and Abang Enjan won the long boat race open to Third Division only; but the Melanaus got their own back by winning both the 30 and 25 men easily with T. K. Alek's *Kijang Nerais*. The brave Foresters again won the Officer's race, having become web-footed by continual labour in the Daro swamps. A crew of boys paddled the Pilate (Pontious?) to victory, and the TuaKampong's Cup was won by Hadji Salleh's men. The 15 men was won by a Sibu boat, *Bujang Kilat*, but the Melanaus ran away with the Consolation Race in T. K. Tira's *Ayam Terbang*.

The great event of the day to many, however, was the launch race. We believe this is the first to be held in Sarawak and attracted six entries - let it be said at once that this does not represent the entire strength of the Sibu Fleet which runs into over a dozen. It was thought, however, that to enter such flyers as the *Mermaid* would have been obviously unfair to the other runners, whilst the conservative steam driven vessels quite rightly refused to consort with such vulgar little sprites as motor boats. Furthermore, it was thought advisable to deter some of the motor owners from entering their craft as the regatta was a one day show only.

The boats passed the starter according to their handicap, but the scratch vessel, *Gertie*, owned by Mr. Reich of Selalang, had little difficulty in overhauling her opponents and won by about twenty lengths from the *Ling Kung Thai*, who came in complete with stained glass windows and flags flying, the same distance ahead of the *Rimba* who had received 6 minutes start. Next in order came *Kengil*, *Sari Tama*, and *Jean*. The last named attempted to excuse her ignoble position by admitting to a bad start. From all appearances this was true unless her pilot intended to run the race backwards.

For those who preferred less stirring events a greasy pole invited persons to try their luck, whilst a pair of clowns spent the entire day in falling about in every conceivable position. One must not forget too those merry makers who, having looked upon the wine when it was red, produced much unconscious humour by their antics, and even rivalled the clowns in this respect. A brass band, under the conductorship of Father Halder, performed marvels, albeit the conductor was at times obliged to risk his blood vessels to sustain the melody when his fellow flautists and trombonists petered out.

The totalisator too, attracted many sportsmen, and we were only just in time to prevent one indignant backer from exhibiting personal violence when one of the clerks refused to pay out on a gun licence which was thrust at him by an excited winner.

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At 2 p.m. a move was made to the Court House where an enormous curry was devoured amidst the customary tense silence, only punctuated by the grinding and champing of jaws. After the usual speeches the distended ones proceeded to the football field where the final of the football competition was played, on the conclusion of which Mrs. Kusel presented this and other cups won at the Regatta. At 5 p.m. a party of Malay schoolboys took the field and, with the utmost indecorum, proceeded to chase one of their revered schoolmasters (no less a personage than Mr. Z too!!) round and round the quagmire. This appeared to be a sort of "blind-man's buff" the wrong way round, and the shriek of delight when the pedagogue was finally caught and rolled in the mud seemed to prove to the rather muddled onlookers that this indeed was the object of the chase. Following this came other intricate games such as sliding on the stomach and sliding on the reverse side, but the general impression left on our minds was a howling mob of semi-naked urchins rollicking and galumphing in themire, oblivious to all and everything, except that they must cover every particle of their body with a coating of brown moist and evil-smelling mud.

The revels were put a stop to by the entry of a company of Chinese boys marching on the field with band playing and colours flying. Having escaped the last mad charge of the mudlarks by inches, this company gravely took up their position on the only fairly hard piece of ground and without a wink proceeded to go through a long and complicated set of military and physical exercises with much precision and endurance. All things come to an end, however, and the party moved off again with the same imperturbable air, their bugles braying lustily and their banners still raised aloft.

Those who were not too weary then went to the Island Club to see Sim Ah Bee win the billiards competition from Augustus Mowe; after which stimulants filled up the gap till 8 o'clock. At this hour a Chinese dinner was served in the Court House, the curry makers having been replaced by perspiring celestials who flitted round mysterious cauldrons like one possessed and broiled and roasted themselves among the leaping flames of many fires. The result was a dinner of superlative quality, fully qualified to satisfy the ravenous guests.

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At nine a move was made to the boxing ring which had been erected on the padang (public field) and brilliantly illuminated with high power lamps. In spite of the slowly rising floods this ring had been surrounded by enormous expectant crowds since seven o'clock who every now and again expressed their impatience by a roar. Even the ladies showed their interest in the noble art, as benches and benches surrounding the ring were occupied by squatting Malay girls who, as the water rose over the seats of the benches, preferred to remain where they were rather than miss the opportunity of seeing their loved ones perform - indeed a service of love!!

The programme consisted of five contests of four two-minute rounds each. Owing to the excellence of the Chinese dinner the writer (who was, by the way, referee) missed the first three fights which were between beginners. It is said, however, that the lads put up a good show and showed a considerable amount of promise. Suhai, a

diminutive lad from the Resident's Office, beat Duin; Anthony (known professionally as Young Harry) beat Jaha, and Lanun beat Sirat. After an interval the two big fights of the evening came on. Battling Sabul, a Kuching Star, was matched against Teck Dee, a forcible if not quite orthodox boxer. A strenuous four rounds resulted in Teck Dee being awarded the fight. It is possible that Sabul was the better boxer but he lacked his opponent's weight and strength and was called upon several times to stand up and fight. The next contest was a rather one-sided affair, Young Hon, alias James Hon, knocking his opponent Taha all over the ring in the first round. Taha, who is said to have a reputation in Kuching, attempted to stay another round but the referee stopped the fight after a minute, as Taha was obviously too groggy to continue and retired to his corner. His second, however, refusing to throw in the towel, and Taha being unable to continue to fight, the referee counted him out. It was noticed that a very good spirit was shown in all the fights, there being no case of bad temper or ill feeling between either principals or their supporters. During the intervals those who preferred something rather less bloodthirsty were regaled with dancing in the ring by the star actresses of the local bangsawan (Malay opera). These damsels pivoted and gyrated to the amorous tunes of a Malay band and chorus and to the obvious satisfaction of the local knuts, who at times unable to hide their feelings, joined in the merry dance. During all these proceedings an excellent band, conducted by Sejili, performed fox trots and other seductive music, whilst frequent explosions from the neighbourhood of the harbour indicated that Mr. Hiller-Mallett was starting up his mighty barrage again.

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And lastly one must not forget to mention the crowd and such a crowd too! - everyone was there at least throughout the whole day - as far as the eye could reach was a seething mass of humanity. Staid and courteous Hadjis om their flowing robes - jovial Dyak Chiefs from the hinterland - scores of chattering Melanaus from the far away sago districts - hundreds of Malays dressed as fancy suited them, brogue shoes, bow ties, store suits - droves of Malay girls in gorgeous headcloths, their silver anklets tinkling as they walked - processions of Dyak women, most of them in their wonderful gala dress but some alas! in batek sarongs and highly-coloured flowered coats so dear to these maidens - hundreds of Dyaks. Dyaks in "gents' boaters", Dyaks in girls' coats, Dyaks in striped pants, Dyaks in almost nothing at all - all were there. Tamils in the last stages of inebriation - dignified Sikhs in holiday turbans - Sepoys in national dress - Chinese Towkays with enigmatic faces - droves of Foochow tappers - dozens of Foochow women with their neatly coiled hair and coloured trousers - whilst all around and in and out squirmed and skedaddled hundreds of little boys whose nationality was totally obscured by their thick coating of mud. How happy everyone seemed - in fact why shouldn't they? - there was something for all. For those who wanted a gamble, games of hoop-la and other tests of skill were on tap, where one was almost persuaded to achieve the impossible by the thought of the handsome prizes offered. Those who experienced the gnawing pangs of hunger could satisfy themselves at the numerous foodstalls where anything from a complete hot supper to a dish of cold eels could be obtained at prices to suit even the most modest pockets.

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It was a day which will live in the memory for years to come - and the sight of that enormous, reeling, rollicking, exultant crowd just before the Sarawak Anthem was played at 11 o'clock should be quite sufficient recognition to those who had organised the day and who wondered, perhaps, if it had been a success.

Need more be said?

The Optimistic Fiddler

Notes from Sibu (1926)*

The recent big arrivals of immigrants into Sibu have become one of the things to go and see - not that the conditions are any too pleasant; in fact, those who possess over sensitive noses had better remain in the Club. A long journey from China, including a stay in Singapore, and much shipping and transhipping under conditions far from ideal does not make the weary travellers very presentable, added to which personal cleanliness has so far possibly been a very minor detail in the minds of most of them.

When possible the Port Health Officer meets the ship some way down the river and attempts to examine the majority of the voyagers before Sibu is reached. To accompany the doctor gives an inkling into many things of which, perhaps, we were ignorant of before and causes the inquiring one furiously to think. Under supervision of attendant dressers and the ship's staff the male immigrants are lined up in a queue (or the celestial idea of one) - coats off and trousers pulled up above the knees. By the doctor's side stands a vaccinator with lymph and disinfectant ready. The word is given to start in - off we go!! One by one the men and boys squeeze themselves into position before the doctor. There is no time for messing about - with anything from two to four hundred people to examine time is an object.

The doctor goes at it in an experienced way - "heart all right - lungs fairly so - what are those scars?" - "had them long?" - "feel his legs - yes, he'll do" - "been vaccinated?" - "No" - "pass him on to the dresser." "Next one please! Hurry up." - An old man totters along - "what is your age?" - "Forty." - looks like sixty to me! Indeed it would appear to any one - scraggy grey beard and weak eyes - "good enough, let him through." Next one - a small boy. "Just walk along the deck a bit please." The child tries but to do so but fails miserably. The doctor turns round and whispers a certain disease in my ear - "keep him apart, dresser, until I can see him later." And so on for over an hour - some get through - indeed the majority - but some are told to stand aside.

The women and children come next. To my mind these are the most pathetic of all. Anxious mothers clinging fondly to wizened little babies whose heads are covered with sores - little faces covered in boils - dreadfully discharging eyes - little children who are said to be three years old but who appear to one to have barely reached a

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* *Sarawak Gazette*, Vol. LVI, No. 877, 1 October 1926, p. 255.

year. The mothers too are often weary to breaking point - weak from trying to bring up large families on starvation diet. One by one these women are passed along and most get through as it is perfectly obvious that their wretched appearance is mostly the result of privations and dirt.

The ship is now alongside the wharf and the immigrants are crowding the sides of the vessel watching the animated scene below. Boatloads of their fellow countrymen are hovering round the ship shouting and gesticulating - the barriers behind the wharf are besieged by a clamouring mob of their own people. How sleek and prosperous they look to the weary voyagers - indeed it would seem that at last they had reached the promised land.

On the wharf the Government officials prod and push the passengers as they step ashore in an attempt to get them moving and on into the examination sheds. The big Sikh policemen and their shorter Malay brothers may curse heartily at their apparent stupidity and emit questionable jokes at their expense - but who would have the heart to badger such a crowd. Family parties sit on their luggage and refuse to be moved therefrom until father collects the whole of their belongings - mother shepherds a bevy of daughters along loudly calling for her male relations - little boys stagger in their efforts to help carry things far too heavy for their puny strength. The wharf is littered with a collection of articles which might be from a jumble sale - although what these bundles contain remains a mystery, as all are clothed alike in that particular lightish blue sacking material, a suit of which is said to last two years in Foochow - and there is never any idea of one suit on and one suit off.

At last order is more or less restored. Towkays are claiming their own people, and the Customs officers are submerged in a stupendous pile of baggage which is in everybody's way and which is the cause of the most raucous din and uproar you ever heard.

All things come to an end, however, and the sheds are slowly clearing. The unlucky ones are taken to the hospital - the others sleep where they can.

Tomorrow a new life is opening for these people - a life of surprises. Everywhere are to be met their fellow countrymen - well fed, prosperous and contented. The local Government (what terrors have been connected with that name) takes no toll of their meagre belongings - the roads are safe for travel - there is land to be obtained - their friends and relations explain there is nothing more to be feared. Is it a wonder that at the first opportunity they send for their remaining friends in Foochow.*

Watch these people - notice their appearance in another year. Perhaps you think this description if too highly coloured? Well! come and see!

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* Here Archer refers to the port city of Foochow (now Fuzhou Shi) in the Fujian Province of China

Just my luck, you hear some unfortunate person say who has been caught in a deed which is committed daily by others but who have escaped detection. In this case, however, I don't mind saying it was darned hard luck.

The Little-Tin-Gods-On-Wheels of the Municipality decreed that bicyclists must not carry children (or anyone) on their handlebars, and the police were told to act accordingly.

Think, therefore, of the confoundedly bad luck of a big burly Dyak in chawat (loin-cloth) and flowing hair who was hustled into my office one afternoon. I immediately had visions of an "amok" or of gory heads and other horrible ideas.

Do you think it was anything like that? Not on your life - the wretched man - the very first pukka-chawat-bicycle-riding-Dyak in Sibu had been collared for bringing his little son on the handlebars all the way from his native village, over an atrociously bumpy grass road with potholes at intervals.

And this was the first (and up to now the only) case brought in! Luck! There ain't no such thing.

It's a poor heart that never rejoices (or, in other words, any old excuse for a binge); but it is not everyday we say good-bye to the Air Survey Company who have spent the last six months in Sibu.

On the 14th of August the Sibuites ("Sibues" would sound more appropriate, or perhaps "sibutes."-Ed.)? were the guests of the Company, and were welcomed on arrival by a bombardment which nearly blew the hungry revellers off the path altogether; in fact shattered nerves were only mended by a weird and wonderful "cup," the secret of which I would not divulge for anything, that is to say even if I knew it. After dinner, the usual speeches having been made, and which varied with the individual, a move was made in the direction of the Great Treasure Hunt.

A description of the Grand National might very well apply to the career of most of the runners. At a steady trot frantic efforts were made to negotiate the dykes and ditches with which Sibu is so well supplied. Panting runners vainly attempted to read the cryptic notices which were to put them on the scent, and the most wonderful acrobatics feats were performed, albeit the stygian darkness covered these dauntless deeds. As was quite correct the brainiest runner (in spite of being carried most of the way on account of housemaid's knee and a ruptured suspensory ligament) solved the enigma and Father Halder arrived back panting and proud to be awarded the prize.

On the 15th a proclamation signed by three gentlemen invited all and sundry to the manor of Bab Maleng where revels lasted far into the night. Supper was laid in the grounds and appetites were satisfied amidst the flowerbeds and pots.

Owing to the excitement of the moment many details escaped our notice, but we do remember seeing one gentleman devouring a plate of ice cream and earth with the greatest gusto, whilst another, mistrusting his fellow men, collected something of

everything and carefully withdrew to a distant part of the garden in order to enjoy himself.

The members of the Company left by detachments within the next few days, Messrs. Vincent and Bishop flying to Singapore on the 17th, Messrs Raynham and Andrews on the 24th, whilst Mrs. Raynham and Messrs. Durwood and Thorne left by more conservative methods of travel at different times. The sole survivor is now Mr. Parker who is inconsolable for the loss of his machines, and spends most of his time wandering round the deserted hangar like a spirit possessed.

To all these, and to those who left previously, Captain and Mr. Gaskell and Mr. Piercy, Sibu can only wish the very best of luck and hope that they will not forget the many friends they left behind.

The Optimistic Fiddler

A Note from Upper Sarawak (1928)*

In these days the women of Europe and America have taken up games seriously. Damsels with ferro-concrete limbs decoy the superior male round 18 holes, freezingly refuse your offer of a stroke a hole, give you a thorough hiding, and then stick you for a cocktail at the 19th. Rubber-made maidens bombard you with half-volleys, smash your returns, and then hint darkly at pat-ball. Mixed hockey will recall painful memories, and even the Straits of Gibraltar have been compelled to capitulate to the persevering Miss Gleitze.

The modern girl boxes, fences, flies, runs and shoots. A ladies' four of bridge is a tense and awe-inspiring spectacle, and their quickness of hand at roulette is paralysing. Burnt feather and sal volatile are things of the past; Kalzana and cocktails are their modern substitutes. The Occident, however, is far from the Orient, and the little ladies of the East seem wary of imitating their more energetic sisters.

When, therefore, I was asked to referee a ladies' football match, it took much argument to convince me that I really was awake and taking nourishment.

Arriving on the ground, which was surrounded by a large and talkative crowd, I blew shrilly on my whistle and the players rose up from the ground and walked upon the field.

Twenty-two (or was it thirty-two, the numbers matter little) Javanese ladies of all ages and sizes much to my alarm began to take off their coats and *sarongs*. Modesty, however, was not outraged as every player had her fighting clothes on beneath. Each one pleased herself, and the variety was astonishing.

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* *Sarawak Gazette*, Vol. LVIII, No. 903, 1 December 1928, p. 263.

Pink shorts with black stripes, blue and white check shorts, pale blue with pink intersections, pink and black hoops, black with lace bottoms all very skimpy and tied tightly round the waist with a short cord. Their upper works were clothed in skin-tight bodices (or are they camisoles?) Here again exotic colours were popular. The players' ages ranged from mature matrons of powerful physique to slim girls whose physique seemed to have been left behind. Several of the more experienced players sported headgear, the popular choice being that article known as a "horsey cap". Others bound their heads with yards of cotton, but the youngsters screwed their hair up and trusted in Allah.

The teams lined out, 8 forwards, 4 halves, 3 three-quarters, 2 goal-keepers and a reserve of three or four on the touch line to help where necessary.

Up goes the ball, thrown in the air by the referee, and the game has started.

The forwards hurl themselves at it as it comes down, and in a moment half a dozen are on the ground, the sound of a large tear proclaiming the fact that disaster has fallen early on someone. A stout lady emerges form the scrum, running with the ball held in front of her, ludicrously like a steward on a channel steamer. She is pursued by the scrum, whilst two or three of the more agile overtake her on either side and wait for an opportunity to spring. Forward dashes an opposing back who grabs the running lady by the hair, they take a bad toss and the goal-keeper runs out and kicks both. The referee, whilst attempting to give a foul, is kicked as well, and pairs of females engage in single combat in far corners.

A long lean lady gets the ball, forgetting which side she is one, neatly scores into her own goal.

Doubling madly along to retrieve the ball the referee is tripped up and a mob of women surge over his body. Goals are scored every minute, but who by and into whose goal everyone has lost count. The gorgeous shorts are bedraggled, and one or two of the flamboyant bodices have not stood the unfair strain.

Females in the crowd, unable to look on, feverishly throw off their clothes and join the game. Faster and faster the struggle becomes, and the appearance of another ball enables one to witness the unique spectacle of two goals being scored at the same time.

Half time is disregarded and is really quite unnecessary as players change ends with impartiality.

Forty minutes is considered enough, and then their men folk swarm upon the field and appropriate both balls and the game is at an end.

Battlefields are pathetic sights at all times. Bits of lace-insertion, hairpins, fragments of ribbon and (dare I say it) tufts of hair cover the ground. The hysterical warriors sit on the ground and regard their torn and split war-coats with pride. The fighting shorts may have parted, but what of it, "it was a famous victory"?

The referee is led off by friends. He walks with downcast, glazed eyes staring at nothing. For indeed. he has looked upon a scene of mighty valour, a struggle of prodigious deeds, and of pluck and endurance beyond the ken of any man.

The Optimistic Fiddler

Round the Kuching Streets (1929)*

There flashed past me the other day a motor bike ridden by a Chinese youth. On the pillion sat sideways a young Chinese girl. Her slim silk-clad legs ending in dainty white shoes were swung out in front; her attenuated skirts bellied to the breeze and showed a considerable amount of knee. Both her arms clung to the waist of her cavalier, and her jet black bobbed hair blew this way and that.

Barely another hundred yards a Baby Austin driven by a charmingly dressed native lady over-took me.

Having nothing much to do and, being of a speculative nature, I made a note of passers-by for the next five minutes. A Morris lorry driven by a Tamil - a European in a small Fiat - five Chinese bicyclists in line ahead - a squeaky taxi (naturally a Chevrolet) - a high European official in a blue Morris Oxford - two Malay grooms on the masters' ponies, both wearing Tom Mix hats and coloured handkerchiefs round their necks (the riders I mean, of course) - a young Chinese lady cyclist - three little boys on wobbly bikes - another high official in a yellow Morris Oxford - a peculiar car driven by a European (it looked like a Jowette) - two motor buses racing, with about four true wheels between the pair of them - a motor lorry full of rails - a Police Officer in rather a noisy car - a Sikh trying to ride a bicycle (he fell off opposite me) - a sort of big packing case (I think they call it a Gharry) drawn by a pony about the size of a big Collie dog - twenty-four bicyclists - five more motor buses - another Baby Austin - a led pony - one more high official in a yellow Standard - a merchant prince in an Austin 12 -a lorry carrying something which is not usually mentioned in polite society - two more cyclists - and as the five minutes finished - a motor ambulance.

Mazed, I stood there watching this internal-combustion-velocipedical-equine procession, and thought to myself of the Kuching of not so many years ago - say somewhere round the year 1912.

I remember but two cars in the town - and then they did not always go.

There was a motor bike and sidecar - a most dashing affair, and one solo. The first motor bus appeared in 1912 and used to run to the 7th mile - at least it was so advertised to run. Actually it was about even money on it reaching the 2nd mile, 3-1 against to the 5th mile and 10-1 the 7th mile. I remember one day joining a picnic

* *Sarawak Gazette*, Vol. LIX, No. 912, 1 September 1929, p. 146.

out to Quop. We boarded the vehicle which ran all right until the first hill was reached. There it stopped half way up and started to run backwards. We all jumped out and clung on to the vehicle. This occurred at every subsequent hill, the driver admitting that he never could remember which was the clutch and which was the brake. We used the bus once again to go to the races - but having unfortunately gone through one of the pet Public Works Department culverts, it mysteriously disappeared for ever.

Those were the days of horse-flesh, when people kept ponies for use - not simply for pot-hunting. Any morning you could meet half a dozen owners out on Green Road, and a favourite gallop was down the Datu's Road, now, alas, covered with stone.

There was no railway, a cinema only at intervals, and perhaps a couple of hundred push bikes. The Inspector of roads used a bullock cart to take him to the end and slept the night there. Young Chinese ladies had not yet taken to bicycling (in fact, their costumes forbade such a pastime) nor did they do pillion riding. Saises (drivers) had never heard of Tom Mix and Baby Austins were still unborn.

* * * * *

What a change! In those days there was an air of dignified repose about the streets and roads surrounding the bazaar. One heard but the patter-patter of the rickshaw men or the tinkle of a bullock cart. The raucous horn - the piercing shriek of the train - the abominable din of the motor tractor. These were yet to come.

People lived a less hurried life. A newly-joined Cadet's calling list meant a formidable campaign of rickshaw riding for several afternoons - nowadays $4.50 for an hour and a half of a battered Chevrolet suffices. A trip to Bau to Matang was a lengthy business - now it is merely a one day picnic. Europeans took a pride in their private rickshaws, and even the public ones were frequently raced by roistering outstationers.

There is no end to this grousing. Why, even the whisky tastes different (and is too as a matter of fact) and the liquid which admits on its own label to have merely "the proportions of real gin" has not the real knock-'em-over effect of *square face.*

Anyway the little Chinese pillion rider looked very nice - and that's something anyhow!

The Optimistic Fiddler

Musings from Simanggang (1931)*

There are seasons for everything. For instance the Spring, when girls came out in dimples and boys came out in pimples. Lately Simanggang has passed through the *begawai* season.

Erudite readers, or those who have enough money to buy Wilkinson's dictionary, will no doubt turn to page 561 of that monumental work. Any translation given there, however, will only confuse the would be *begawai* explorer. In short a *begawai* is a tight, a binge, a beano, a blind, a bust - where the sober minded get moderately lit up, the steady drinkers really blotto, and the genuine dipsomaniacs working on the Einstein theory wake up with the feeling that it is the morning before the day on which they started.

Especially do newcomers to the Country like attending a *begawai*. It is true that the guests are expected to bring with them, if not most, at least the more potent part of the liquor. In many ways the savages have the best of us in sound common sense.

It is almost impossible to mistake the house of one's hosts - indeed, for the last half hour, as one gropes one's way through tangled undergrowth or slides down greasy hills the dull thump of gongs and other instruments of percussion has drummed in our ears. Louder and louder grows the noise as we emerge from the undergrowth and come in sight of the lighted house.

> Inside above the din and fray
> We heard the loud musicians play
> The Trues Liebers Hertz of Strauss.
>
> Strange mechanical grotesques
> Making fantastic arabesques:
> Their shadows raced across the blind.

The rest of the night is a haze of draught after draught of *tuak* (rice wine) backed up by a pull at the stuff we call whisky now and again. Young Dyak bucks dance with feathered headdress and drawn parang. We danced too. So frantic were the efforts of the Police Officer that he split his sarong in an awkward place. Venerable old Dyaks tramp for hours round and round the house, intoning a melancholy dirge and hitting the floor with the heels of the sticks. The pangs of nausea overcame the more bibulous at times - and the sounds of immoderate retching ring through the house. Just before the earliest streaks of dawn we fling ourselves on to our hard beds, whilst round and round us tramp the old men. As we were just slipping off into a sleep the moans of the dirge and the agony of the nauseated made a fit accompaniment to our crude couches.

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* *Sarawak Gazette*, Vol. LX, No. 935, 1 August 1931, p. 163.

A few minutes later, so it seemed, the first glimmer of dawn. Past our incumbent forms hurried a procession intent only on reaching the edge of the verandah.

> Then down the long and silent street
> The dawn, with silver sun-dyed feet
> Crept, like a frightened girl.

* * * * *

The latest rage in Simanggang is riding the bore, - which really means sitting in a leaky boat for half-an-hour in a state of nervous distraction - one second of ecstasy (or real blue funk, according to the performer), and then five minutes in a swift foaming river hanging on to an overturned boat. Friendly Malays rescue us and right our boat and we paddle home in sodden garments and a fresh evening breeze. Chills, pneumonia, influenza and other possible results are warded off by the stuff that we call whisky nowadays, but which except for its price bears little relation to the real stuff of the happy days before the war.

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A number of Malay children in Simanggang have organised a theatrical troupe. It is a most select Green Room Club too, and the chief performers are the coming society ladies and gentlemen of the town.

All Malay plays seem to us alike. There is the Princess who gets lost in the wood. There is the hero, a real cross-gartered Knight, generally two comic leads, a party of attendants on the hero, a villain and his gang, a petty Princeling, perhaps a comic policeman, a number of females who are apparently husbandless and wander round woods at night and a baby or two.

These little performers rely on a lot of fiddle, a noisy clown and a memory for singing innumerable *pantuns* (quadtrains) to keep the play going.

Is it best to affect not to hear quite all the clown's quips - but then who is there old enough who does not remember Marie Lloyd!

The last scene is perhaps the most satisfactory one for the performers. The beauty chorus lines up and any susceptible young man on throwing a dollar, a cent, a brass ring, a stick of toffee or what not at the lady of his choice, had the satisfaction of listening to a solo from the lady in question all about the charms and peculiarities of the donor. As one may expect the warmth of feeling expressed by the singer is in proportion to the article thrown at her feet.

The Optimistic Fiddler

More Musings from Simanggang (1931)*

Like Gaul the opening of the new Government Offices in Simanggang was divided into three parts - the official or stodgy part, the sporting or sweaty part, and the Terpsichorean or best-behaviour part.

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At seven thirty a.m. on the 27th July, a salute of seven guns was fired from Port Alice battery, and precisely at eight o'clock, a procession of European and Native Officers headed by the Resident and Datu Haji Dulrashid, arrived in front of the new offices.

Here were assembled guards of honour furnished by the Police, under the Command of Assistant Sub-Inspector, Joini, and pupils from the Malay Government School, St. Luke's School and the Simanggang Chinese School, under their respective masters. The latter school paraded with drums and bugles. In a space provided for them were stationed Malay and Dyak Chiefs, representatives of the Chinese community and many Government servants. A large crowd filled practically the entire space.

At eight o'clock the flag was hoisted on the new flagstaff and the guards presented arms.

The Resident, accompanied by the Datu and the Administrative Officers, then inspected the guards. On the conclusion of this ceremony the Resident advanced to the main entrance, and taking a Malay sword handed to him by Penghulu Lambai, cut the cord stretched across the entrance and declared the offices opened. Haji Yaman, the contractor, then handed the keys of the several offices to the Resident, who in turn gave these to the respective chief clerks, who opened all the doors.

The whole assembly then entered the offices.

After inspection by the public, including a large gathering of Malay, Chinese and Dyak ladies, the Datu in an eloquent speech detailed the transfer of Divisional Headquarters from Fort Alice to the new building. He reminded his audience of the great part played by Fort Alice in the past and the regret that all must feel that present day conditions had necessitated a change to a more commodious building. At the same time he stressed the fact that a change had to be made, and all would agree with him that the offices just opened were a credit to Government and would be a great convenience to the public. Fort Alice, he added, would remain outwardly as it was, but would be transformed into a jail and Police office, and that Government had no intention of doing away with such an historic building. It would remain a

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* *Sarawak Gazette*, Vol. LX, No. 937, 1 October 1931, p. 208

permanent memorial of the old days in Simanggang and the Second Division as a whole.

Refreshments were then served, and the proceedings concluded shortly after half-past eight.

The new offices is a substantial and imposing block of buildings which can compare with any other Government building in Sarawak. In this respect mention must be made of the excellent plans prepared by the Public Works Department, the careful supervision of temporary clerk of works, Matnor, lent by that Department, and last but not least Haji Yaman, the contractor, who displayed energy, promptness and care during the comparatively short time in which such a big building was constructed.

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At nine o'clock, the regatta started and continued until noon. Owing to the present state of trade this event did not include the usual races for boats with unlimited crews, and the prizes were modest.

Nothing, however, will ever prevent natives from joining in one of their favourite sports, and Dyaks and Malays eagerly contested all the events.

As usual the judges and the umpire (and in most cases the starter too) were bombarded by disappointed runners, all assuring those officials that they were indeed the winners. An arrack bar, however, did much to dispel the disappointed ones, whilst several generous Chinese gentlemen added to the supply, which early in the proceedings threatened to run out.

Perhaps the greatest event was the offices race which, owing to Mr. Harnack's doubtful tactics in including in his selections everyone who had carried his pegs, was won by the Survey Department. The crew of Tua Tua Kampong, however, gave them a close race. The struggle for last place was a contest of giants, but the Datu and his brother Native Officers stayed the course better than the European Officers, who steered by one who should really have been in a bath chair, zigzagged their way arriving at the wharf before anyone else in an exhausted state. The greasy pole had no difficulties for the boys until it was put at an impossible angle.

The land sports began after tiffin which may account for the poor times in the first few races. On the system of push-as-push-can, however, most of the events went to the strongest, whilst the tug-of-war, twelve a side and as many as could be tailed on without comment, was won by the team who managed to evade the umpire's eye.

The greasy pig hunt produced the customary mud scramble.

After the finals for the Recreation Club competitions took place, when prizes for tennis, table tennis (commonly called ping pong). billiards and badminton were won.

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Fort Alice mess, the oldest in Sarawak, held its farewell dinner at eight o'clock.

Nowadays it is difficult to write about the old Sarawak. Perhaps it is better so. Nothing is so boring as to read or listen to the ways and graces of a past generation. Or is it not that we are not minded to do so. Progress is ever ruthless and the cherished ambitions and manners of a past age are only so much junk to the present age. Did they "do their stuff"? Assuredly they did - the record of past members of the mess, now kept and framed, is surely a reminder of the many Officers, known and almost unknown, who have at various times been members of the mess, and who have in their different ways made so much of the history of Sarawak.

After a short speech by the senior member the Loving Cup, acquired by the mess in 1916 to commemorate its 50th anniversary, was passed round for the last time.

The party then proceeded to the old Court Room of Fort Alice where a monster Malay and Dyak *main* (performance) had been arranged. Many were unable to gain admission owing to the press, but those who did were still there until the early hours of the next morning.

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It is a moot question whether it is wise to educate the Ulu Ai Dyak. I know that the statement will rouse the ire of many educationalists, but if you do want to teach them something stick to the A.B.C. and such useful sentences as "The snow-white lamb plays on the green grass" "the rat runs down the road. Run, rat, run!!," but it is dangerous to teach the elements of science.

The other day a diving contest was about to take place. A deputation of Tuai begged us to be careful and examine the diving poles before the contestants descended into the water. Believing in their childlike nature we could not see how anything unfair could happen as long as the divers kept under the water. "Oh no" said the Tuai "You don't know all the tricks. The dirty devils (or words to that effect) use hollow poles now-a-days and cut a hole at the lower end. Under they go and immediately gum-suck the hole thereby obtaining air from the heavens above." Lo, the poor Indian.

The Optimistic Fiddler

Jaundiced Jottings (1937)*

"Sarawak Gazette" Libelled

I wonder who jogged the memory of the Editor, the Sub-Editor, or whoever it was used to do the "Answers to Correspondents" in the *Pink 'Un* and induced him to write "Anon. Your story received but too hot for us: try the *Sarawak Gazette*."

Do you think the Editor, the Sub-Editor, the Scandal Reporter, the typist, the office boy, the charlady and Uncle Tom Cobley and all had their tongues in their cheeks, or did they really imagine that the *Sarawak Gazette* was hot stuff?

To me, the *Sarawak Gazette* has always been a model of decorum, although, it is admitted that in the past the slightly bawdy proclivities of certain Editors have called for the blue pencil of the censor. Nevertheless I do remember the most charming wife of the then censor bewailing the fact that "A----r cut out all the best bits!"

Once an Outstationer, Always an Outstationer

The *Gazette*, since I have known it, has been the mirror of Kuching society, but it does not think much of the part of the country which is so quaintly called "The Outstations". Picture Joe Chamberlain ire of London treated Birmingham as such!

I suppose the wild and woolly days of the outstations are gone: few can remember the annual arrival of those dug-outs for the races or their even more dramatic departure. To be quite unpleasant about it all, the present-day invasion is an anaemic and pallid affair: I can't help it, I know I shall get into trouble for saying this, but there it is. What with the radio, electrolux, frozen meat, pansy shirts and post-war whisky even the outstationer of today is a wraith of his former self. Why, only yesterday I was passing a bungalow and saw the family sitting around the verandah listening intently to the fat stock prices! One can imagine how their mouths watered at the mention of fat lamb, prime pork and sides of beef: p'saw! (I never could spell that sound!) we old 'uns were brought up on dead hen and no electrolux, Messrs. Sime Darby please copy.

The Country Is Not What it Was When I Was A Boy

The *Sarawak Gazette*, indeed, has seen many changes since 1880, but perhaps not so many as have taken place since, shall we say, round about 1912.

What glorious pre-war days those were! The 'hoi polloi' drank Andrew Usher's whiskey at nine dollars a case plus import duty of one dollar; the epicures plonked for

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* *Sarawak Gazette*, Special Supplement, No. 1,000, 4 January 1937, p. xvi.

the Black and White at ten cents more a bottle. The noble army of gin drinkers (how they have shrunk these days!) went in for Old Tom at seventy-five cents and square-face, the real A.V.H., not the methylated spirit sold nowadays, at somewhat round a dollar ten, but it was a darned big bottle.

Beer was a great luxury, but not quite so expensive as the apparently molten gold sold nowadays. The big noises took claret with their dinner; a sound of St. Julien was about sixty cents a bottle.

One great wine epicure actually stocked a superior claret for special occasions, and whilst entertaining the Resident's wife the following occurred. Host: "I have some rather special nice wine here, Mrs. X., and should like you to try it." Mrs X: "Charmed." Boy pours it out, and Mrs X, turning to him, - "Tuang ayer sedikit, boy!"* Host: "Ahem! boy, tahan dahulu, bawa claret number dua!"** I tell you this chestnut in order to show you that even in those benighted days we were not quite so primitive as you may imagine. I doubt if the palates will ever get used to the alarming mixtures which the Bright Young People of both sexes call cocktails.

Savage Customs In The Pre-War Days

In the Island Club, not of course the present substantial building, we drank our whisky and our gin with water all bar one member who insisted on his whisky and soda. We all thought this rather (I don't remember what the word was in those days, but it was before the time that 'Cissy' and 'Pansy' had crept into the language) ---, anyway we put it down to the drinker having private means.

Soon, if motor cars become any cheaper, we shall lose the use of our legs. In the days when I was young calling in Kuching was a carefully thought-out scheme. For five afternoons in succession (four if you cut out the very minute Little-Tin-Gods-On-Wheels) the newcomer clad himself in a gent's blue serge suit, straw hat, two-inch collar and black boots, hired a rickshaw and started off, list in hand.

The caller had no Malay, but it wouldn't have made any difference if he had as the rickshaw puller's language was, as it still is, a mystery not yet revealed to Occidentals.

Kuching is a city of hills, and at the bottom of each one the rickshaw stopped. If you insisted on being dragged further the puller simulated a heart attack, whereupon the warmly-clad one walked up the hills, sometimes helping to push the vehicle in the correct Public School spirit, and arrived at the house in a state of complete exhaustion.

The call-ee was never in, and visiting cards, now reduced to pulp, were handed to the "boy", the gardener or some other menial. The return journey down the hills was

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* Pour (add) a little water.

** Bring the number two (lower grade) claret.

frequently exhilarating. In most cases the puller lost control of his rickshaw and with gay abandon flung the shafts over head and jumped - more than once I have decanted on my back on the road in this way, blue gent's serge suit and all. What with all the bullock carts and what not our clothes and our nerves suffered, not to mention the bill for a new pair of shafts which the tearful puller brought to the Government Offices the next day.

Primitive Locomotion

When I see all those abominable internal combustion contraptions sweeping past me on Rock Road, I heartily condemn the occupants to . . . (Delete. - Ed.) We kept ponies for riding, not pot-hunting, and the spectacle along Green Road and Datus' Road every early morning would have delighted the heart of Sir Walter Gilbey.

One remembers the gentleman whose pleasure it was to canter along the grass verge (is that the right word?) in and out among the row of rubber trees, but who never could guess which side of the line his mount was going to take. As sure as eggs is eggs if the pony swerved to the right, the rider had backed the other side and over he went. One would have thought that in an even money chance he might have got it right once; to my knowledge he never did.

Then there was the German chemist with charming equestrian manners who got into much trouble for so courteously "swatting" a horse fly which had alighted on the hind quarters of the pony ridden by a rather touchy official. Away went the latter at breakneck speed to end in a ditch upside down, and for ever and ever a rabid anti-Teuton.

We Did Not Go About In Woad

In dress we followed certain rigid conventions. Open coats of tropical texture were barred; there was no written rule, it simply wasn't done. One could wear a topee, a double terai (cloth head dress), a straw hat, a cap or a fisherman's hat with a "tutup" (buttoned) coat, but not a bowler.

White dinner jackets were wrong, shell jackets (well, you know what I mean!) were right.

Store suits, evening dress and dinner jackets were correct, however green they were. Shorts, except for football or hocky, were disgusting. We played cricket and tennis in rather shrunken yellow flannels and not in the kind of child's drawers which the modern athlete affects.

Jodhpurs were rare, and were generally only worn by Merchant Princes who could afford such garments.

The ladies, God bless 'em, played their games in costumes which would give the modern young thing fits. The voluminous piqué (good memory, that!) skirts, the

layers of petticoats and the whatnots that went with them must have been rather a handicap, but they played good tennis for all that.

Golf was not a ladies' game and the bowling alley (as, indeed, the whole club) shut its doors to femininity.

Old-World Dancing

We danced much more strenuously when we did dance. None of your walking about with a far-way-look in your eye; none of that lounge lizard stuff, no 'black bottom' rumba or any twitching business, but real seize-your-partner-and-give-her-her-head tactics. We performed in the full glare of the lights and the noise of the band, no hole-in-the-corner business with the lights turned out bar a sea-sickly glimmer and the nauseating wail of a saxophone.

After dancing, we led our partners to the claret cup, and it *was* claret cup too, not simply *coloured verdigris* and cucumber. The favourite recipe was that of a pair of bachelors, and tradition says that a spoon would stand up in it.

Still Moaning

Yes, the *Sarawak Gazette* has seen many changes since those dashing days. We didn't fill our insides with the corpses of beasts which had died years before, we didn't feel that we were uncivilised if there was no Electrolux in the pantry (no, this is not an Ad!), we didn't sit spellbound at the Talkies (what a word!) and listen to the Yankee twang of artificial Lovelies with sham eyelashes and glycerine tears. Oh yeah! Sez you! And how!

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I didn't tell you I've just had jaundice, did I?

The Optimistic Fiddler

Outstation Reminiscences (1948)*

I see in the *Straits Times* that Sir Andrew Caldercott has written about Malayan outstation life forty years ago.

Now that rather takes the wind out of my sails as I had already prepared notes for a similar sort of story on Sarawak say, thirty-six years ago. I do not of course expect readers to compare my writing with that of such a famous man as Sir Andrew. Whatever he writes has the backing of his remarkable and successful career, but we

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* *Sarawak Gazette*, No. 1084, 2 July 1948, p. 137.

can, I think, be regarded almost as contemporaries and our descriptions therefore of outstation life in those happy years may corroborate each other.

It is a great day in a young administrative officer's life when he gets his first outstation on his own - in fact when he crows on his own dunghill. It was even more so in those days as there were no telegraphs, no telephones and, so far as we were concerned, no Secretariat. In my case I was pitch-forked into Oya and told "Oh! you'll learn all about it when you get there."

I arrived in Oya by sailing boat. This will, I expect, sound strange to present-day cadets who complain of slow motor launches.

We left Mukah in the middle of the night, just when the south wind began to blow. As we rowed out to the mouth of the river the bar was growling and murmuring and the *juragan* (ship's captain) carefully covered my few belongings with a *kajang* (woven palm fronds), which I took to be an ominous sign.

However, the bar was not too bad and once at sea we made sail and the crew, with one exception, wrapped themselves up in their *kain* (cloth) and unashamedly went to sleep.

The south wind, which generally comes down about the middle of the night, is not a strong one.

I lay on this little boat and listened to the old cry of sailors the world over - whistling for a wind.

Tua, tau kladi.
Makin lama, makin jadi!

Why this call and what it means, I do not know, but the wind does come obedient to their appeal.

Towards morning, just before the false dawn appeared, I saw a ship's lights right down on the horizon. I drew the attention of the *juragan* (captain) to this and he replied laconically "Venus". As dawn appeared the wind veered round to the south west and our hopes of further progress vanished. I, myself, slipped over the side and swam ashore, preferring to walk along the beach for the last three miles rather than spend half a day tacking and backing all over the China Sea. And so I arrived at my first station unheralded and unsung, and very wet and very hungry.

As I walked up the beach I met a very early riser, who said politely "*Kuman-an-ku-au* (Where are you going)?" I realised that I was in Melanau country.

I think it was a good thing to begin one's outstation life among the Melanau. They are a conservative people and like to be left to go their own way.

Oya was (and I think still is) a regular back o'beyond - a sleepy hollow and I learned more of the ways of Sarawak there than in any of the other more go ahead

places. Although it was 1912, the ways were those of 1850. A very old Melanau asked me once "Is the Queen well?" The Boxer (by whose name we called the Chinese shop that sold European goods) retailed a good claret, St. Julien or St. Emillion, because "all English gentlemen drank claret for dinner".

There was no Secretariat to tread on one's tail, and the Divisional Resident only came around once a year - and that was in the snipe season - or perhaps again when the *punei* (types of pigeon) were flighting. You were on your own dunghill and crowed just when you liked. On idle days, when no one came up to the Government offices, the best idea was to take the prisoners and go *pukat* (drag-net) fishing. No doubt there would be in these days gubernatorial frowns at such doings, but one learnt many things in those piscatorial excursions. All about Tugan, for instance, and why Melanau girls eat sago.

The Native Officer was old *Pangeran* Mohamed, who went by the affectionate name of "Farmer George". He had two of the prettiest daughters I have ever seen, black, yellow or white, and I admit that I used to call on the old man, ostensibly to learn Melanau, but perhaps in the hope of seeing the girls. One of them died at the age of sixteen and I always associated her with that heart-rending poem by Cameons to his little dead Chinese wife. In this case, her father built a roof to cover her virgin grave, being careful to leave an opening in it for Azr'il, Maluku'l Maut, the angel of death, to come for her soul.

It was here that I learnt what a *bantut* was, although opinions differ as to what exactly it is.

Here too, I learned the boating songs, and whenever I go up and down the Oya river in a stinking motor vessel I recall the haunting refrain of "*Lanang, belado, lanang*!"

Internal combustion engines, however useful, will never make me forget those voices singing, stroke for stroke as they paddled through the night,

bukan mabok pinang
lanang mabok anak orang!

When I say that there were no telephones I was not speaking the truth as we and Mukah had the only outstation phone in the country.

Of course it did not always work and disgruntled litigants used to cut the wire. We used the old fashioned bellow-through-the-wall instruments and apparently they had no anti-lightning apparatus. I was once blown clear off the stool on which one had to stand with the remains of the severed instrument still in my hand. The local policemen had a curiously polite routine when telephoning. They rang first, you answered by ringing too, they then replied to your ring, you courteously replied to his (ring). They rang again to show that they knew their manners; you rang in reply - and so on. Conversations generally began after the twentieth ring.

Few now will know what a Court of Requests was. It was in fact, the petty debts court and was, I understand, a relic of Dickens.

When Melanaus are improvident and until it was abolished in 1922 this Court took up most of one's time. It was not a good thing, as the Chinese regarded it as a cheap debt collecting agency. Most of the claims were admitted, but now and again one had to sit in judgement on claims which were not only absolutely denied, but on statements in which the defendants said they had not even seen the Plaintiffs before!

One case I heard was that of rather an attractive Melanau girl who was sued by a Chinese shopkeeper for a long list of articles. Weary and bored (I had been in Court for three hours) I wrote down the list as stated by the Chinese. "Five *kati* (3 kg) of sugar?" "Yes" from the girl "Two *depa* (3.7 metres) of blachu (plain cloth)?" "Yes." "Ten roti cabin (biscuits)?" "Yes." "Three depa of *kain perlas* (5.5 metres of sarong cloth)?" "Yes." "One silk sarong?" "NO" from the girl most emphatically. A slight squabble and the girl admitted that she had not bought it. The Chinese had given it to her. "Why" asked the tired magistrate. "Oh, think for yourself" replied the pert girl.

The Optimistic Fiddler

Sailing in the Outstations (1948)*

Last month I wrote how outstation officers sailed up and down the coast, and I believe that I almost became lyrical about it. There is, however, something about sailing, something tranquil and peaceful, which even the most up-to-date motor launch can never give you.

That time just before dawn - the false dawn- when the south wind dies away and is replaced by the fresh sea breeze. Gradually the light comes and the sea, so lately indigo, becomes translucent with the first rays of the rising sun. The sleeping crew wake and instinctively turn their heads towards the East. The sails billow in the freshening breeze and little waves lap alongside.

To be quite frank, the Government sailing fleet on the coast stations was not much to boast about. Some time in the past somebody or other got the idea of building a boat on the lines of the *barong* or *panau* boat (types of fishing boats with a lugsail), but decking her over and building a sort of cabin just abaft amidships. This type of craft has remained the flagship, as it were, of each station. Built partly on purely native and partly on European lines they had the disadvantages of both and none of the advantages. It is true the so-called cabin (it was not really a cabin. Merely an open ended canopy of *kajangs* - woven palm fronds - on a wooden frame-work) did give some shelter in a rainstorm, but that and the heavy deck robbed the craft of the buoyancy of the Melanau *panau* boats. Their rig was much the same

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* *Sarawak Gazette*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 1085, 2 August 1948, p. 156.

except that the Government *barongs* used to hoist a jib in addition to the two lugs. In fact, however, the jib was a nuisance, and if it was carried out under the idea that one could sail nearer to the wind someone must have been very dense as it did nothing of the sort. Being flat-bottomed there was a lot of leeway and on most voyages there was a lot of rowing with remarkably clumsy oars, five a side.

Like the orthodox *panau* boats, however, the old Government *barongs* did sail like billy-ho with a soldier's wind, which is, as you know, a wind right behind. Then you all lay on the deck, smoked cigarettes and let her go, the only people sitting up and taking notice being the two steersmen manipulating the extraordinary twin rudders.

* * * * *

If one was in a real hurry one took the Government *bandong*. These craft were built almost exactly on the lines of the fishing *bandongs* (covered sailing boat with lugsail) and were beautiful vessels. There was not much comfort, but they did go, and one hung over the weather side to counteract the enormous spread of the lug they carried. These *bandongs* too, we used for *pukat* (drag-net) and *anchau* (line) fishing. This is a most enjoyable pastime, particularly *pukat* and I have spent many an exciting morning with my crew of policemen and (I suppose I must say) prisoners.

We caught all sort of fish - and one had to be careful of the poisonous ones. If any of my readers have been stung by a *pari* they will know what I mean. All came into the net, including those comic little fish which blow up like a balloon when you stroke their stomachs.

* * * * *

A queer looking craft was the Government *tuko* (small sailing boat) at Mukah. I never did find out where she came from as she was the only vessel of her kind on the coast. She was smaller than the *barong* and of much lighter build. She sailed well and could get within a reasonable number of points of the wind, but she had the most horrible feeling of insecurity in a stiff breeze. She did not suit queasy people at all. Luckily I have never suffered from that disability at sea.

Twice I was wrecked, once in the Government *barong* and once in a *panau* boat.

On the first occasion at three in the morning a squall struck us. The crew on deck, including the look-out, were asleep and the steersmen were nodding over their tillers. The sheets had been made fast, the course set and the south wind had been blowing gently. I, too, was asleep, when I was awakened by the most awful din. The crew were yelling and everybody was giving orders. Our lee gunwale was then awash and we turned over the next moment. Bits of wreckage, a grating, oars and part of the cabin roof floated and we made our way for these. I am a poor swimmer and get asthmatical in the water, but I hastened to propel my oar in the direction of the beach, some half mile away - I could not get the image of sharks out of my mind! There was no loss of life and we all waded ashore after an hour or so in the water. The *barong*, oddly enough, was salved some days later.

The second occasion was rather dramatic. I had sailed over to Balingian to settle some jelutong road cases and whilst there the North East monsoon suddenly came down in earnest. When I got down to the Kuala on my way home the bar was just one seething mass of foam and the whole fishing fleet had run in for shelter. I stayed in the Tua Kampong's house for two days waiting for the gale to blow itself out, but all it did was to blow harder.

Now the date was the 21st December and I had planned to spend Christmas in Sibu. The old Tau Kampong give me no hope, and apart from my desire to get away, the sandflies were so bad that for the two nights I had slept under a canvas sail amidst the odour of decaying fish, decomposed prawns and raw sago.

On the morning of the 22nd I set out to walk the forty miles to Mukah. If you look at the map you will see that the coast is perfectly straight; not a bay, not a cove, not a cliff and not a rock. By evening I was two thirds of my way; not bad going for that shadeless endless road. I slept in a fishing *barong* and ate with the fishermen and his wife as I had no food of my own. The next morning I was off again and reached Mukah before noon.

On the morning of the 23rd, we tried to get over the Mukah bar in a fishing *panau* with a picked crew. Our intention was to make either Oya or Igan, whichever looked the least dangerous.

As we approached Mukah bar the roar of the breakers drowned all other noise. Looking astern I saw crowds lined up near Kuala Lama and outside Fort Burdett watching our progress.

The crew strained at the oars and we met the first roller with a bang which drenched us from bow to stern. The next one half-filled the boat and the bottom-boards and tackle were awash. Now they came, one after another, covering us with spray and half-drowning two women who were crouching underneath our feet. Half-way over the bar we were waterlogged. The rowers were up to their knees in water and despite the threats and entreaties of the two steersmen, perched precariously on the gyrating stern, all rowing had ceased. One roller forced us broadside on to the bar, the next sank us. Luckily all the dozens of odds and ends of a *panau* boat's gear float and we clung to this flotsam and jettison.

We all struck out for the beach and the rollers rolled us in. I landed stark naked, a most unfortunate occurrence as the place on the sands where I came ashore was where a bevy of Melanau girls were looking for *lukar* (cowry shells). One of them, saucy girl, tossed me her head *kain* (cloth), a gracious and decent gesture, but I am afraid the giggling that was going on made even my wretched body blush all over.

Once more I set off along the beach for Oya that evening, and by express paddlers to Dalat, a nightmare passage through the "kut" at dead low water and a lucky lift in a commercial launch up the long Igan River to Sibu. I arrived triumphantly at Sibu just before dinner on Christmas Eve.

* * * * *

Our river craft were generally the build known as *temoi* (canoes), and were all sizes. Fourteen men boats, eight men boats, *kajang s'krat* paddled by four men and diminutive *bedar* with two men.

There was much competition amongst outstations to possess the handiest, the fastest and the most comfortable craft. The acme was reached, thought one District Officer, when he fitted little shelves to hold glasses of different sizes, places for round bottles and square bottles (square-faced gin) and hooks on which to hang the corkscrew and the old-fashioned push-bottle opener.

His opposite number not to be outdone fitted his boat with plate-rack and miniature meat safe. The race began and only ended when the boats became so cluttered up with gear that the paddlers couldn't move them and the District Officer had nowhere to sit at all.

When one got to the far upper reaches of the rivers, of course, all this glory was useless, and one transferred to small Dayak craft paddled, poled and dragged up the streams, and over rocks and gravel-beds. Here, one squatted amidships and put up with the discomfort and heat.

It was amazing, however, how soon one forgot one's discomfort in the beauty and charm of the countryside. Gone were the long reaches of the great sluggish river, with their mud-banks and endless thick vegetation right down to the water's edge. Here was movement and light and aliveness. The water foamed and bubbled and one ate one's meals on sparkling gravel-beds.

Hour after hour slim-legged Dayaks poled one along. One felt ashamed to be trying to read a Greek Testament in front of such vigour and energy.

Once I had a jewel of a captain, or whatever you call the head of the crew. He was a middle-aged Haji, slim, alert and witty. Never have I seen a man so successful with the ladies. Every evening, when we had decided to stop at the longhouse for the night this Haji would gather the girls round him. By hook or crook, or by means which were unperceivable to me, he always got the best supper, the choicest tit-bits and, as I ruefully knew, all sorts of favours later. Many times have I heard him "telling the tale" to a bevy of *indu dara**, with eyes goggling out of their heads.

As an ambassador, a Government agent, or whatever you call it, he was superb.

* * * * *

I wonder who "Tuan Djek" of the Straits Times is. When the Papers come, most spasmodically, I look for his fascinating page. As a poor imitator, I lift my glass to you "salamat, panjang umur, Tuan Djek!"**

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* *Indu dara*, young post-pubescent maidens.

** Greetings. May you have a long life, Tuan Djek.

Appendix I

J. B. Archer: Chronology of Official and Honorary Posts

Feb. 1912:	Arrived in Kuching, a Cadet in the Sarawak Administrative Service.
Sept. 1912:	Posted to Sibu.
1913:	Posted to Oya.
1914:	Promoted to Assistant Resident status, 3rd Division.
1918:	Promoted to Resident 2nd Class status, 3rd Division.
1921:	Administrative Service posts reclassified. Archer becomes Assistant District Officer, 3rd Division.
1922:	Transferred to Kuching in charge of the Printing Office and editor of the *Sarawak Government Gazette* and the *Sarawak Gazette.*
1923:	Served as Acting Resident for a few months.
1924:	Served as Magistrate, 2nd District Court. Kuching Turf Club formed and Archer a Committee member, on which he served for the rest of his life. Appointed District Officer, Sibu.
1927:	Member of the Council Negri. Appointed District Officer, Upper Sarawak and Lundu.
1929:	Appointed District Officer, Kuching; Served as Acting Resident, 1st Division, for a few months. Served as Coroner for Kuching. Editor of the *Sarawak Gazette.*
1930:	Promoted to a Class II officer level. Appointed Deputy Resident, 2nd Division. Then promoted to Resident, 2nd Division.
1932:	Awarded a Long Service Decoration.
1934:	Appointed Resident, 4th Division. Became a member of the Committee of Administration that was responsible for governing Sarawak whenever the Rajah was not in Kuching.
1935:	Promoted to a Class 1A officer level.
1937:	Appointed Resident, 3rd Division.
1938:	Adjudicated in the Residents Court, Kuching on the James Scott case.
April 1939:	Appointed Chief Secretary following Parnell's resignation and in that role, was the Officer Administering the Government (OAG) during any absence of the Rajah.
March 1941:	Invested with the Master of the Order of the Star of Sarawak as a token of long and loyal service and measures taken to evolve the proposed constitution for Sarawak.
April 1941:	As Committee of Administration's chairman, Archer signed an agreement with the Rajah transferring certain legislative powers to the Supreme Council. Following the Rajah's Proclamation, Archer became the effective head of government by being appointed President of the Supreme Council.

May 1941: Forced to retire from the Administrative Service over trying to serve both the Rajah's and the Committee of Administration's interests.

July 1941: Appointed Information Officer of Sarawak and Officer-in-Charge of Propaganda; Became editor of the *Sarawak Gazette*; Joined the Special Police.

Oct. 1941: Made Officer-in-Charge of Man-Power in addition to his other duties.

24 Dec. 1941: Archer and all the European officers who stayed in Kuching at the time of the Japanese invasion were initially imprisoned and interned after a few days.

12 Sept 1945: Raised the Sarawak flag at the Batu Lintang internment camp on liberation of Kuching by Australian troops.

1 Nov 1945: Appointed Political Adviser to the British Military Administration in Sarawak.

11 Feb 1946: Archer wrote to Brigadier C. F. C. Macaskie, head of the British Borneo Civil Affairs Unit, on the Datu Patinggi's pledge of loyalty to the Japanese.

15 April 1946: Appointed Chief Secretary by the Rajah on the resumption of civil government in Sarawak.

15 May 1946: Acting on the Rajah's wishes, Archer cast a decisive vote on cession to Britain.

21 May 1946: Archer became the Officer Administering the Government when the Rajah left Sarawak for the last time.

1 June 1946: Appointed Judge of the Supreme Court.
Appointed Chairman of the Rubber Fund Committee.

3 June 1946: Chairman of the Sarawak Turf Club at its first post-war meeting.

1 July 1946: On behalf of the Rajah, handed over sovereignty to the British Government and relinquished all his official posts.

17 July 1948: Committed suicide at his home in Kuching.

Note: H.M. King George VI invested Archer with the Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George after Sarawak was ceded to Britain on 1 July 1946.

Appendix II

Average Daily Ration In Ounces Per Man Per Day In Lintang Camp

(Excluding Garden Produce)

Commodity	July 1943	Dec. 1943	June 1944	Nov. 1944	Jan. 1945	Feb. 1945	March 1945	April 1945
Rice	17.41	20.26	17.62	11.03	9.03	10.44	8.10	9.12
Salt Fish	.95	1.17	.95	.16	.12[b]	-	.40	-
Fresh Fish	.37	-	.29	.15	.09	-	.17	-
Fat Pork	.44	.23	.25	-	.26	.20	.10	.10
Lean Pork	.22	.17	.11	.42	.24	.32	.05	.06
Sweet Potatoes	4.21	1.57	.49	-	-	-	-	.49
Green Veget.	5.65	1.18	2.96	2.87	2.45	.58	1.04	.06
Other Veget.	9.15	6.20	8.59	9.46	9.86	17.11	16.89	30.11
Green Peas	1.19	.70	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sugar	.61	.59	.65	.67	.40	.36	.37	.34
Tea	.11	.19	.46	.21	.09	.12	.10	.10
Salt	.71	.70	.64	.69	.42	.37	.38	.38
Cooking Oil*	.08	.04	.04	.03	.02	.02	.02	.03
Curry Powder	-	.05	.08	.08	.05	.08	.08	.05
Pepper	-	.08	-	.13	-	-	-	-
Ubi Kayu	-	-	5.11	6.55	3.77	3.84[x]	3.15	-
Sago Flour	-	-	-	2.25	2.52	1.55	-	-
Beef	-	-	-	-	.08	-	-	-
Ginger	-	-	-	-	-	-	.07	-
Coffee	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.04
Eggs	-	-	-	-	=	-	-	1[z]

* = Bottles [b] = Blachan [x] = Yam [z] = Per Head

Source: J. B. Archer (Compiler and Editor), *Lintang Camp. Official Documents and Papers Collected from the Records of the Civilian Internment Camp (No. 1 Camp) at Lintang, Kuching, Sarawak, During the Years 1942-1943-1944-1945*, Sarawak Government Printing Office, Kuching, 1946.

Appendix III

Obituary in the *Sarawak Gazette*[*]

With deep regret we report the death of the Honourable Mr. J. B. Archer, C.M.G., M.S.S., known for many years to readers of the *Sarawak Gazette* by his pen name of the "Optimistic Fiddler".

Born in 1893, Mr. Archer entered the Sarawak Civil Service at the age of nineteen and spent the first eight years of his service, apart from a brief interlude at Sadong, in the Third Division, mainly in the Coastal District. It was during those years that he learnt the Melanau language and formed the strong affection for this people which was so noticeable in his later writings. His interest in the *Sarawak Gazette*, which he retained until the end of his life, dates from 1922 when he was Editor of the Gazettes and Manager of the Printing Office in addition to his other duties.

In 1939 he was appointed Chief Secretary and on several occasions before his retirement in 1941 he became Officer Administering the Government. From the time of his retirement until the occupation of Sarawak by the Japanese Forces, he was fully occupied in defence duties as Information Officer and Special Policeman and later, with his colleagues, underwent the hardships and rigours of over three and a half years in the Japanese Internment Camp at Batu Lintang.

A close associate during those drab years described him as having taken over a new lease of life and, on re-occupation, it is not surprising to find that although his health was seriously impaired, he immediately devoted his energies to the rehabilitation of Sarawak. In succession he became Political Adviser to the British Military Administration, Acting Chief Secretary and Officer Administering the Government.

On the occasion of his second retirement from public office he replied to an Address of Appreciation from the Supreme Council:-

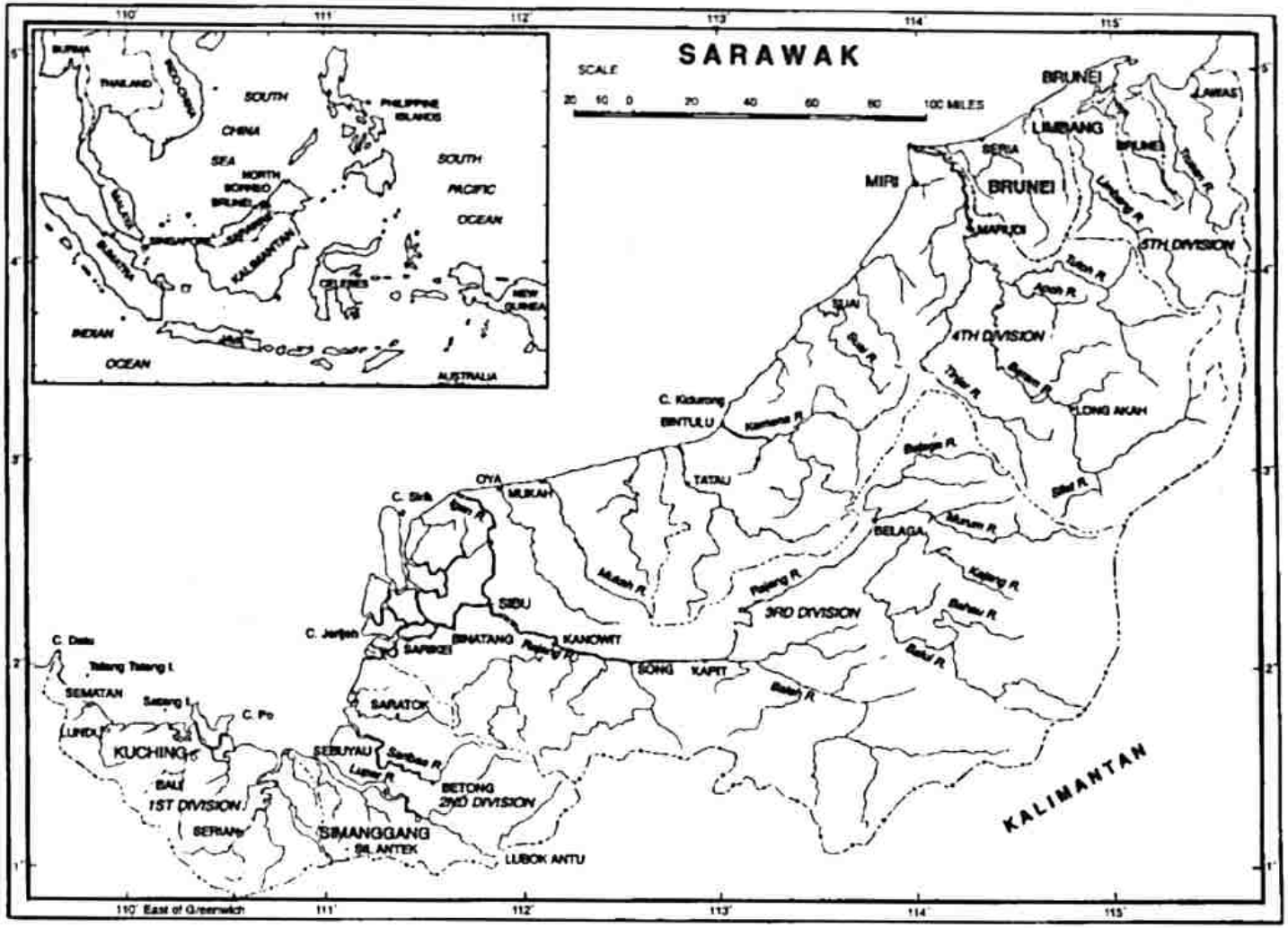
> You all know, I think, how sad I feel at leaving a Service of which I was proud to be a member for so long. I was the last European active member of His Highness the late Rajah's staff and I served His present Highness throughout the whole of his reign . . .[**] It may be considered trite, but I can truthfully say that it has been a labour of love, and I am glad to have gained the good opinion of my late fellow councillors.There comes a time when it is desirable both for the good of the State and the good of the individual that Senior Officers should

[*] *Sarawak Gazette*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 1085, 2 August 1948. There was also an obituary in the London *Times* on 21 July 1948.

[**] The Rajahs referred to here are the second Rajah, Charles Brooke and the third Rajah, Charles Vyner Brooke.

retire. The time has come for me to do so. I leave you with gratitude in my heart for your kindly thoughts and your good wishes.

John Beville Archer will long be remembered by the communities of Sarawak as a good friend and as a trusted servant of the country which he had served faithfully and well.


SARAWAK
SCALE
20 60 0 20 40 60 80 100 MILES
BRUNEI
LIMBANG
LAWAS
SERIA
BRUNEI
MIRI
MARUDI
5TH DIVISION
4TH DIVISION
SUAI
BINTULU
TATAU
OYA
MUKAH
SIBU
3RD DIVISION
BELAGA
LONG AKAH
SONG
KAPIT
SARATOK
KUCHING
SEBUYAU
BETONG
2ND DIVISION
1ST DIVISION
SIMANGGANG
SEMATAN
LUBOK ANTU
KALIMANTAN
SOUTH CHINA SEA
PACIFIC OCEAN
INDIAN OCEAN
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS
AUSTRALIA
110° East of Greenwich