

## CHAPTER II.

APPOINTMENT AND DEPARTURE OF SPECIAL MISSION—OUTBREAK OF THE MUTINY IN INDIA—ARRIVAL AT SINGAPORE—ITS CHINESE POPULATION—CAUSES OF THEIR DISCONTENT—THEIR VALUE AS COLONISTS—TRIP TO THE MAINLAND—RESIDENCE OF THE TUMANGONG—WILD SPORTS OF THE MALAY PENINSULA—GAMBIER PLANTATIONS—LUXURIANT FOREST—THE VILLAGE OF TUBRAO—DEPREDATIONS OF TIGERS—GREAT INCREASE OF CULTIVATION—START ON A TIGER-HUNT—UNSUCCESSFUL RESULT—ARRIVAL AT JOHORE—MALAY HOUSES OF JOHORE—HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS OF JOHORE—A PICTURESQUE REPAST—RETURN TO SINGAPORE—ITS RAPID PROGRESS—ITS FUTURE.

IN consequence of the unsatisfactory progress of affairs in the south of China, described in the last chapter, that country was favoured with a larger share of public interest in England during the spring of 1857 than had been accorded to it at any period for the last fifteen years. An expeditionary force of 5000 men, with a staff equipment calculated for a much larger army, and in every respect thoroughly complete, was on its way to the probable theatre of war. Generals and officers of high rank were leaving town by each successive mail. Not only had England determined to send out a Special High Commissioner, accredited as ambassador to the Court of Peking, but

France, Russia, and America, had each declared their intention of improving the occasion, and despatching Plenipotentiaries Extraordinary to China. Thus everything conspired to induce the belief that the attention of the world was about to be concentrated on the Celestial Empire ; and it was not to be wondered at, that, though not present in London drawing-rooms, Yeh did in fact monopolise the honours of the earlier part of the season, or that the prospect of accompanying a special mission to the scene of his exploits, and, possibly, to the throne of his Imperial master, possessed attractions of a novel and striking character.

More fortunate than former embassies, we were saved the long sea-voyage, which must have had a tendency to damp the ardour of exploration ; and being consigned instead to the mercies of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, found ourselves, on the 9th of May 1857, rushing across the Desert in the first train which had ever carried passengers to the central station, enveloped in clouds of dust, and indulging in most sanguine anticipations of the future.\*

\* The special mission was composed as follows :—His Excellency the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, K.T., High Commissioner ; The Hon. F. W. A. Bruce, Secretary to the Mission ; Messrs Donald Cameron, George Fitz-Roy, H. B. Loch, and R. Morrison, Attachés ; Mr Laurence Oliphant, Private Secretary.

On the arrival of the mission in China, Mr T. F. Wade was attached as Chinese Secretary ; and in August, Dr M. K. Saunders, R.N., was attached as Medical Attendant. In March 1858, Mr H. N. Lay accompanied the mission to Tientsin as Assistant Chinese Secretary

How little could we imagine that a storm was at this moment bursting over the plains of Upper India, which should rivet upon itself the concentrated and anxious gaze of the world, and which, in its swift and relentless course, seemed pregnant with consequences so disastrous and appalling, that all minor cares of state policy faded into insignificance, and became utterly absorbed in its one engrossing interest, just as passing squalls are overwhelmed and smothered in the impetuous fury of a typhoon.

It was not until we reached Galle that we received from General Ashburnham, who had just arrived from Bombay, and was on his way to the command-in-chief in China, the first intelligence of the serious aspect which matters had assumed in the north-west provinces of India, and of the spread of disaffection among the sepoy troops. Although the particulars of the dreadful tragedy which had taken place at Delhi and Meerut had not yet reached us, we heard enough to lead us to anticipate the probability of these occurrences affecting, in an important degree, the prospects of the mission to China.

General Ashburnham and his staff accompanied us to Singapore, whence they proceeded to China, whilst

and Interpreter. In July, Mr Bruce proceeded to England in charge of the Treaty of Tientsin, and the Hon. N. Jocelyn arrived to replace Mr Cameron, who was promoted to a post in Europe. Mr Morrison also returned to England, and Mr Oliphant succeeded Mr Bruce as Acting Secretary to the mission. In September, Mr Loch went home on sick certificate, having also charge of the Japanese Treaty.

Lord Elgin disembarked here, and took up his residence with the Governor, to await the Shannon, the frigate placed by the Government at Lord Elgin's disposal, and the arrival of which was hourly expected. The importance of rendering the approach of an envoy invested with such extensive powers, as imposing as possible in the eyes of a nation notorious for attaching the highest significance to external pomp and ceremony, seemed more than sufficient to justify the delay of three weeks which was thus unavoidably incurred. Nor, under the circumstances, was the time misspent. A confirmation of the news we heard at Galle, together with the representations of Lord Canning, induced Lord Elgin to take upon himself the serious responsibility of diverting from their destination, the first instalment of the troops which soon after arrived at Singapore from the Mauritius on their way to China.

Other circumstances were not wanting to render our stay at Singapore full of interest at this juncture, and these were closely connected with the objects of the mission. A few weeks had scarcely elapsed since occurrences had taken place among the Chinese populations at Penang, Sarawak, and Singapore, which, from their simultaneity with one another, and with the treacherous attempt upon the lives of the British residents at Hong-Kong, induced the suspicion of an extended concerted action,—a suspicion which seemed to have amounted to certainty in the minds of the great majority of the English in these settlements, in whom a knowledge of the power and extent of the

organisation of the Chinese secret societies, excited a not unnatural alarm, and whose minds were so deeply impressed, by old association and prejudice, with a fear of the cruelty and treachery of the Chinese, that they were apt to overlook other qualities in the character of that race, which, to an impartial observer, seemed effectually to neutralise these attributes.

In each of the instances above alluded to, local causes of irritation existed, apparently sufficient to account for the disturbances which ensued, without connecting them with the disputes at Canton. In Borneo, the immediate origin of the outbreak was a difference of opinion in a question of opium smuggling between Sir James Brooke and the Chinese, though for some time past these people had manifested an independent spirit, and a disposition to resist the laws which the Rajah—who had treated them perhaps with too much kindness and indulgence—saw fit to impose. That their animosity was confined to himself and his executive only, and involved no general principle of hostility to the British, was proved by the fact that they requested the Bishop to assume the reins of government. In the Straits settlement, the promulgation of some police regulations interfering with certain of their religious ceremonies and festivals, and the manner in which these were put into execution, roused their indignation ; though it is questionable whether, had the object of these ever been explained to them, they would not have recognised their expediency.

At present there is a population of 70,000 Chinese in Singapore, and not a single European who understands their language. The consequence is, that, in the absence of any competent interpreter, they are generally ignorant of the designs of Government, and, regarding themselves still as Chinese subjects, are apt to place themselves in an antagonistic attitude whenever laws are passed affecting their peculiar customs. No effort is made to overcome a certain exclusiveness arising hence ; and this is fostered by the secret societies, which exercise an important moral influence upon the minds of all, but more particularly the ignorant portion of the population. Were Chinese themselves put into positions of authority under Government, and allowed to share to some extent in the duties and responsibilities of British citizens, which, intellectually speaking, they are quite competent to undertake,—the barrier which now exists between the two races would be partially removed, and the mutual distrust and suspicion engendered by our present system would in all probability quickly disappear. Nor is this mere speculation. We have fortunately in their own empire a perpetual proof before our eyes of that reverence for authority *when judiciously enforced*, which is one of their chief characteristics, and which has for so many centuries been the preservation of its union and one great source of its prosperity.

That the most active, industrious, and enterprising race in the Eastern world should be regarded as a

source of weakness, rather than of strength to a community, implies, *prima facie*, a certain degree of mismanagement. The Chinese who have been attracted to Singapore by its freedom from commercial restrictions, and advantages of position, have contributed to make it what it is, the most prosperous settlement in the East; and when we consider their extraordinary acquisitiveness and love of gain, we can hardly suppose that their sympathies with their brethren in China would be sufficiently powerful to induce them wantonly to interrupt a commerce, from which they derive enormous profits, and destroy a mercantile emporium which may be said to be in a great degree their own handiwork, and in which they possess a larger stake than any other class of its community.

To the stranger first arriving in Singapore, nothing can be more striking than the busy aspect which the place presents. Every street swarms with long tails and loose trousers; throughout whole sections of the town are red lintels of the door-posts covered with fantastic characters, which betoken a Chinese owner. At early dawn the incessant hammering, stitching, and cobbling commences, which lasts until nearly midnight; when huge paper lanterns, covered with strange devices, throw a subdued light over rows of half-naked yellow figures, all eagerly engaged in the legitimate process of acquiring dollars by the sweat of their brow. It is impossible to over-estimate the value of such a race, or to rate too highly the importance of placing them in such relations with the

governing powers, by the cultivation of a more familiar intercourse, and a certain deference to their habits and prejudices, as should render them contented and trustworthy, as well as profitable, members of society.

I was fortunate enough to have a further opportunity of observing the energy and enterprise of these people, in a short trip which I made to the mainland, in company with Mr Cameron and Captain Scott, at the invitation of the son of the Tumângong of Johore, who is now the ruler of that Malay State. The latter is the son of the man who claimed the independent rule of the territory, in which, at the time of our purchase of Singapore, the island was situated. This claim was disputed by the then Sultan of Johore. The Tumângong, however, was supported by the British Government, which entered into a treaty with him and the Sultan of Johore, by which it was agreed, that the rights of the Tumângong to the government should be recognised, upon payment by him to the Sultan of a certain annual pension. Both these dignitaries now reside in Singapore, and the Tumângong or his son only occasionally visit their possessions on the mainland. In the latter we found a most hospitable and amiable entertainer.

The protracted festivities consequent on a ball given in Lord Elgin's honour by the mercantile community, rendered our departure rather later on the morning of the 13th June than we had intended. At last, however, our host, to whom such gaiety was unusual, appeared with a very roomy dog-cart, in



which we packed away ourselves and our guns. Our road intersected the island, here about fourteen miles across, first passing between well-trimmed hedges of graceful bamboo, through plantations of nutmegs, that clothe the numerous swelling knolls with which the country round the town is pleasantly diversified, and the summits of most of which are crowned with the handsome bungalows of the English and German residents. About half-way we pass Bakit-timah, the highest hill in the island, and which, though only 500 feet above the sea-level, enjoys a climate so superior to that of the town of Singapore that it is talked of as a sanitarium for troops. The country generally is pretty well cultivated; there are two or three sugar plantations, but the cultivation is not sufficiently remunerative to induce extended speculation. Gambier (*uncaria gambir*) and pepper are more profitable; and we pass through occasional plantations of these on our way to Kranji, whence we were to cross the strait which separates the island from the main.

We had some difficulty in embarking on board the two sampans, or Malay boats, which we found waiting for us here, anchored at a distance from the sloping muddy bank, and which soon transported us to the opposite shore, whence we ascended to the comfortable bungalow of the Tumângong. Situated upon the summit of a cleared hill, it commands a beautiful view of the narrow straits and swelling shores, clothed in the richest verdure to the water's edge. At the foot of the hill the village of Sicudai,

built and inhabited entirely by Chinese emigrants within the last few years, is perched on piles, which extend some yards from the shore.

We found a sumptuous repast prepared for us in European style in the bungalow, which answers the double purpose of a residence for the Tumângong and a court-house for his subjects. At this point the Sicudai River enters the straits ; and upon its banks a large number of pepper and gambier plantations have been lately opened by the Chinese : it flows round the base of the mountain of Gunung Pulai, which rises to a height of about 3000 feet above the sea-level, and which the Tumângong has consented to allow the Government to make use of as a sanitarium—an offer of which we have not as yet been sensible enough to avail ourselves. Easy of access, either by land or water, from Singapore, it would be a most agreeable resort for the European part of the population during the hottest months ; and a road from hence might be cut across the country to Malacca, distant about 70 miles, which, while it would open up to Chinese enterprise an almost unknown district, would form a valuable means of communication between our own settlements.

At present the principal attraction which Gunung Pulai and its neighbourhood offer, are the wild animals which are found in those rarely trodden forests. The sportsman who has exhausted every variety of game to be found in the jungles of India, will derive a fresh excitement here in hunting the rhinoceros, or

watching for the wary tapir; while on the muddy banks of sluggish rivers he may surprise the *sâladang* or wild ox, a species peculiar to the forests of the Malay peninsula, and which has not yet been described by naturalists. From the accounts we received, the elephant-shooting seems to be inferior to that in Ceylon; whilst, although the jungles literally swarm with tigers, a *shickar*, in the Indian sense of the term, is unknown. Our time, however, did not admit of any exploration in this direction; we therefore followed the advice of the host, who proposed visiting a large and prosperous village upon a neighbouring river. Re-embarking in our sampans, we coasted for some miles along the northern shore of the straits. Generally, they are not above a mile broad, and in some parts they narrow to little more than three furlongs, so that we could scarcely realise, as we glided between their wooded banks, that this was not a river, but the only passage which at one time was known into the China Seas, through which, for near two centuries, Portuguese and Dutch galleons had passed, freighted with the rich merchandise of the East.

In the afternoon we entered the mouth of a considerable river, which we ascended for two hours, when we left the boats, and started on foot for the village of Tubrao, while our sampans proceeded to the same place, following the circuitous windings of the river. Our path led us through plantations of pepper and gambier, separated by broad belts of heavy jungle; winding between tall columns of leaves, where the

pepper vine, trained like the hop, completely concealed with its rich luxuriance the slender poles that supported it. Sometimes we forced our way through thick bushes of the Gambier, in the midst of which the thatched cottages of the cultivators are buried: if we observe a thick smoke issue from one of these, and enter to satisfy our curiosity, we find a group of Chinamen collected like witches round a caldron, in which are bubbling and boiling bushels of gambier leaves. As soon as the juice is inspissated and boiled to the consistence of a syrup, it is poured into moulds, and when dry cut into cakes, having very much the appearance of pieces of light-coloured Indian-rubber. The refuse leaves are thrown into a large canoe-shaped trough, which projects over the caldron, and carried away to the pepper-plantations for manure. The leaves are pulled three or four times a-year, and in fifteen years a plantation becomes exhausted. Mr Crawford says: "Gambier contains from 40 to 50 per cent of pure tannin, and hence it has been of late years largely imported into Europe, to be used in the purposes of dyeing and tanning; the quantity imported yearly into England being not less than 6000 tons."

It is a relief to escape from the slanting rays of the sinking sun, and dive into the dark recesses of the forest, where tall limbless trees rise to a gigantic height, and weave their topmost branches into an impenetrable shade; whilst orchids, five or six feet in diameter, cling like huge excrescences to the

leafy roof. It is singular, that though upwards of two hundred species of timber have been collected, most of them of great height and growth, not above half-a-dozen are really valuable ; among them are the ebony, sapan, and eagle wood, but more valuable than all, the gutta-percha. The Tumângong told us that he had prohibited the sale of this important article of commerce for the present, as the accessible parts of the forest had been cleared of nearly all the old trees. The price of the commodity has been recently very much increased in consequence. Among the palms we observed the nibung, nipa, and areka, whilst bamboos waved gracefully over us, rivalled only by the tree-fern ; and conspicuous among the dense underwood, the rattan reared its tufted crown. Occasionally troops of monkeys noisily swung themselves from branch to branch overhead, and birds of gaudy plumage glanced across our path.

The village of Tubrao was situated on the banks of the river, and surrounded by plantations, and we no sooner made our appearance in the narrow street than the whole population turned out to inspect us, so unusual was the sight of a visitor to that sequestered spot. We held a sort of levee in the house of the old Chinaman, who officiated in the capacity of Patriarch to the community. It was a quaint, rambling wooden tenement of one story, with a broad deep verandah supported by carved pillars, and large empty apartments like audience-halls used as carpenters' shops, or bedrooms, or courts, as the occasion might arise,

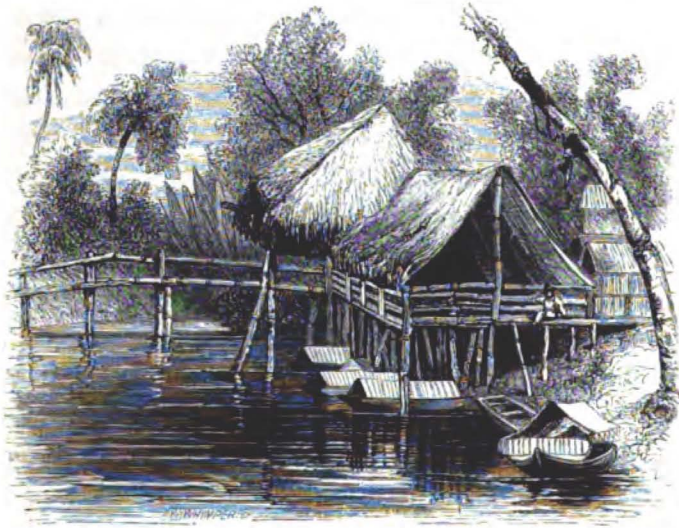
and hung over with the usual gigantic paper lanterns. We seated ourselves in the verandah, and were regaled with disagreeable preparations of betel, in which I observed, as a principal ingredient, gambier, unknown as a condiment among the betel-chewers of Ceylon. Having done due honour to this mark of attention by filling our mouths with its crimson juice, we were glad to wash them out with some delicious tea, served to us in small China cups, together with divers descriptions of sweetmeats.

Meanwhile we were entertained by numerous eager narrators, with wonderful accounts of the depredations which the tigers had recently committed in the neighbouring plantations, and which surpassed all former experiences of a similar character. They pointed out to us among the crowd which surrounded us, the occupants of no fewer than twenty plantations, who had deserted their cottages through fear of these daring and ferocious animals, and taken refuge in the village. Out of the comparatively small population, upwards of fifty Chinamen had been carried off during the preceding three weeks. On one day alone five had disappeared, and when we visited their burial-ground, and observed the number of graves, with umbrellas over them to mark that the bones of the occupants had been found and laid there, after they had been picked by the tigers, we were convinced that this was no exaggerated statement. Upwards of 10,000 piculs, or about £15,000 worth of pepper, had been, in consequence, left upon the trees,

dread of the tigers predominating in the breasts of the owners over love of their property.

As we had brought some rifles with us, we informed our entertainers that we should be delighted to undertake a campaign against these savage enemies, if they could hold out any prospect of success. The proposition was received with unanimous applause, but it was clear that no one had the slightest notion of how it was to be executed. We offered to wait until the following day, and have a regular battue, if they would beat the jungle with drums and fireworks. This, however, was a mode of procedure to which they entirely objected ; and this I secretly did not regret, as a previous experience in India had taught me the danger of tiger-shooting on foot ; so we then suggested that we should proceed, a little before the moon rose, to a deserted plantation, and watch a bait. This was more readily agreed to, and the whole crowd instantly dispersed, and instituted a vigorous crusade against the dogs of the village. The process of securing these was in the highest degree ludicrous ; the screams of the Chinamen mingled with the yells of their unfortunate victims, who seemed to have a presentiment of the fate which awaited them, and avenged themselves on the fat calves of their persecutors. At last, after a degree of noise and excitement, sufficient to have secured as many wolves, two luckless curs were brought to us, and hung by the legs over a balustrade. We protested against this inhuman treatment, and they were in consequence transferred to an oblong basket.

We dined in a picturesque cottage, built upon piles over the river, and could see through the crevices of the floor the sampans moored beneath, and the current gently rippling past ; a rustic foot-bridge spanned the stream, and massive foliage drooped into the water.



Scene on the Tubrao River (Malay Peninsula)

A few large trading-boats gave token of some mercantile activity even in this remote corner of Asia, and we were surprised to hear how recently the process of opening up the neighbouring country, and the creation of commerce consequent upon it, had commenced. Ten years ago, the banks of this river were almost unexplored ; now the produce of 180 plantations was transported down its waters. Some notion of the extent of the Chinese population may be gathered



from the consumption of opium. The Tumangong received  $22\frac{1}{2}$  per cent upon the monthly sales of opium from the farmer of the license. His monthly revenue derived from this source amounted to 13,000 rupees. He also received a ground-rent of one dollar a-month for every plantation of whatever description of cultivation, beginning from the commencement of the third year of its existence. There are now about 2000 plantations in the entire district of Johore paying this rent, and the number is steadily increasing. They are almost without exception the property of Chinese emigrants. It is to be regretted that the cultivators are not permanent occupants. Until, however, Chinamen can be induced to bring their wives into foreign countries, the community to which they migrate only derives half the advantage which would accrue, were permanent ties created which should bind to the soil a race so eminently qualified for its development.

Our repast over, we sallied forth, an uncouth procession. A number of Malays led the way, and flourished their long spears, the handles of which were Malacca canes, with broad blades attached to them. Then we followed, surrounded by numerous torch-bearers, whilst the great part of the village population brought up the rear, the basket containing our canine victims being slung between two Chinamen. After stumbling in darkness through sundry plantations, we at last arrived at the cottage said to be deserted, in which we were to take up our station. To our

disgust, we no sooner approached it than we were greeted with the barking of dogs, and the shouts of men, who appeared as much astonished and dismayed at our nocturnal invasion as if we had been tigers ourselves. They informed us that ten days had elapsed since three of their number had been carried off. The two remaining had then left the plantation in a panic, but had lately returned, and had not been troubled with any new intimation of the proximity of their enemies. Nor could they tell us at which plantation our efforts would be most likely to meet with success, or even where we should be sure to find one deserted. As it now began to rain heavily, and the sky was so overcast as to render the prospect of a bright moon more than doubtful, we determined reluctantly to return to our boats, which we no sooner reached than we urged upon the Tumângong the expediency of proceeding at once upon our journey.

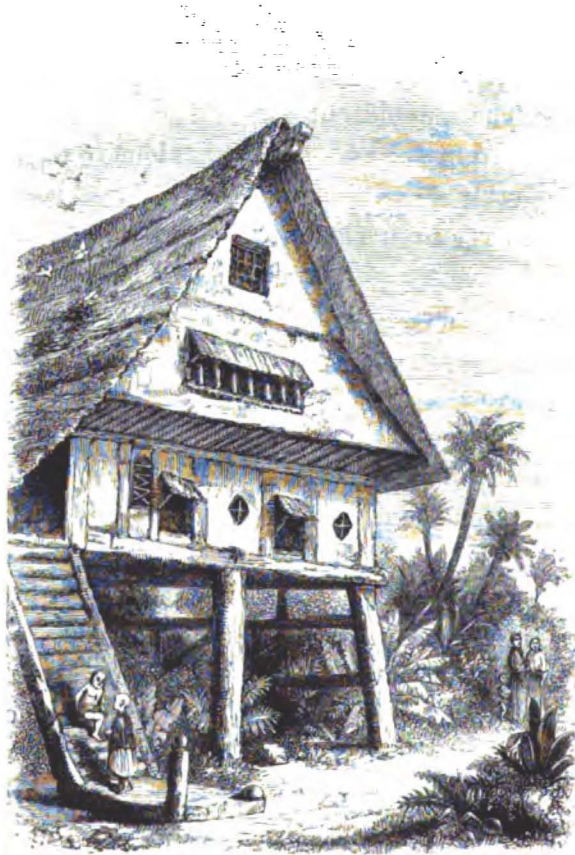
Meantime admirable beds were made up for us on the bottom of our boat under the pentroof of palm leaves, which serves effectually to protect the voyager in a sampan against the mid-day sun, or the dews of night; beneath this we stretched our weary limbs, while with sturdy stroke our Malay crew propelled our light craft rapidly down stream.

Morning found us sailing with a light favourable breeze through the straits, and we soon reached the eastern outlet. Here, on the extreme point of the island, at a spot called Shangy, from whence a good road has been made to Singapore, we landed to break-

fast. The straits at this point are divided by the island of Pulo Obin, upon which some valuable granite quarries are situated. Rounding this island, we shortly after entered a broad river, or rather firth, and sailed for about twenty miles between banks which were heavily timbered, and backed by an undulating country, but we looked in vain for some signs of life. The magnificent virgin forest has not yet been touched by the axes of men anxious to replace it by a profitable cultivation; nor has the broad bosom of the stream yet been ploughed by the keels of native craft, freighted with all the varied produce which the soil is so well adapted to yield, and which possesses the additional advantage of being in close proximity, by water, to a large and ready market.

There can be little doubt, however, that ere long the face of nature here too will be changed by the industrious hand of the Chinese. Our host told us that higher up the river they had begun to open plantations, while he derived a considerable revenue from a tin mine some few miles above Johore. This town is situated upon the left bank of the river, here about four miles broad,—a few Malay houses standing in the river upon piles, and a few more hidden in a thick grove of cocoa-nut trees, are all that now represent the former capital of the state, and residence of its Sultan. The desolation which surrounded it did not lead us to expect much in the town itself, but we were hardly prepared to find only a miserable village, containing scarce a thousand

inhabitants. Still it was interesting to visit, as differing from those Chinese villages which are now dotting the coast and creeks of the mainland. The houses looked more substantial, and had a more



Native House at Johore (Malay Peninsula)

distinctive character. Some of them were three stories high, with windows usually in the gables, latticed and

set in quaintly carved frames ; and out of these occasionally protruded the naked figures of wondering children, or the half-concealed countenances of inquisitive females. The thatch is made of a broad leaf, called the jolong-jolong, screens of which also project over the windows. The sides are sometimes formed of the same material ; sometimes, in the better class of houses, of wooden panels. Whether on land or water the house is invariably built on piles some twelve feet high, and the first story is reached by a ladder. The only object of such an arrangement on land must be to serve as a protection from wild beasts.

There are no historical associations of any importance connected with Johore ; indeed it is a town of comparatively recent date, having only been founded by the Malays in 1512, after their expulsion from Malacca by the Portuguese in the previous year. According to Mr Crawford, from that period until 1810 there reigned in Johore fourteen princes, giving an average duration of twenty-one years to each reign. The prince who died in the last of these years left two sons, who disputed the succession. It suited the policy of the English and Dutch governments to take each one of the rivals as its protégé, and hence the cession of Singapore to the first, and of the island of Bintang to the last. Both princes are now pensioners, the protégé of the English claiming sovereignty over the countries north of the straits of Singapore, and he of the Dutch, those to the south of it, as laid down by the Convention of London of 1824.

We strolled into the interior with our guns, in hopes of seeing game, but the jungle was impenetrable ; and although the marks of large game were numerous, wood-pigeons and squirrels were the only signs of life visible. Then evening closed in, and the sun, ere it finally sank, polished the smooth surface of the river till it looked like a sheet of burnished copper ; and numbers of flying foxes (*Pteropus Javanicus*) awoke to the duties of the night, and flapped lazily overhead on their way to the gardens of the village. We amused ourselves firing at them as they sailed overhead like giant and plethoric rooks going to roost ; but they were usually too high up, and we only saw one tumbled headlong into a grove of cocoa-nut trees, where, however, it was too dark to find him.

Meantime a busy group was assembled round a collection of pots and kettles, which began to possess a strong interest in our eyes. Our host had pointed out to us where the palace of his ancestors had once stood, but at the same time informed us that he possessed no habitation of his own at the former seat of his government, so he had determined to give us an *al-fresco* dinner, rather than invite us into a native house, an arrangement we thoroughly agreed in ; and the growing darkness was soon illuminated with the glare of torches made of damar put into cocoa-nut husks, which flashed luridly upon the tall limbless stems of the trees, and upon dark figures cowering over cooking fires, or hurrying about with water and

the preparatives of dinner. A rude table of boards had been hastily improvised, and, in feeble rivalry to the surrounding blaze, was lighted by the subdued glimmer of a civilised reading-lamp. A handsome service of China, finger-glasses, damask napkins, and all the appurtenances of an elaborately appointed table, contrasted strangely with the rude figures and uncouth forms which waited on us ; for a large portion of the population were in attendance, and added to the novel and picturesque effect of our picnic. Our well-cooked dinner was accompanied by draughts of deliciously cool cocoa-nut water fresh from the trees above us, whose branches were closely intertwined overhead,

“ A verdurous woof,  
A hanging dome of leaves, a canopy moon-proof.”

We quitted with reluctance the scene of our rural festivities, and once more in our sampans swept down the smooth current of the river in the calm moonlight, our crew beguiling the way with shrill unmelodious boat-songs, in which screaming choruses and sudden spasmodic refrains were strangely intermingled with long piercing whistles and yells. In spite, however, of their antisoporific effect, these unearthly noises soon mingled in our dreams, and we only woke to consciousness to find ourselves in broad daylight, coasting along the south-eastern shore of the island of Singapore, and, after a prosperous voyage of twelve hours, reached the town.

Though our expedition had necessarily been limited, it had been sufficient to enable us to appreciate, on our return to Singapore, the strong contrast which the British settlement exhibits to the native territory. Forty years have not elapsed since the condition of our island was the same as that of the mainland. It then contained only the huts of a few Malay fishermen. Already a hundred thousand souls occupy an area scarcely greater than that of the Isle of Wight ; the forest is everywhere giving place to plantations of nutmeg and gambier ; whole suburbs are springing up in the neighbourhood of the town as if by magic ; its capacious roads are filled with ships of every nation ; its revenue, already exceeding 600,000 rupees, increased in 1856 by about a fifth of that sum, so that not only does it pay its own local expenses, but combines with the other Straits settlements to maintain a body of 3800 convicts, and to contribute nearly a lakh and a half of rupees towards the payment of the military force from Madras forming the garrison. Such progress—the natural growth of an American town, and surpassed even by some of our own colonies—is unprecedented in the annals of the East India Company's possessions, and is worthy, on that account, if on no other, of a higher consideration than it has received.

The future of Singapore is but faintly shadowed forth by its past history. That it is destined to hold the highest position amongst eastern emporia seems inevitable ; but the speedy arrival of so de-



sifiable a consummation depends upon its administration. Already its growth has been checked by a system which has, upon the continent of India, proved itself ill-suited for the development of internal resources and the rapid extension of trade; but here are conditions differing from those of any other portion of the late Company's dominions. In addition to the large and daily-increasing Anglo-Saxon mercantile community, a continual influx of Chinese emigrants here compose the great majority of the inhabitants.

It may generally be said that, with few exceptions, whatever product of the Malay or Philippine archipelago demands skill and industry in its production is the result of Chinese labour. Without Chinese labour neither the Malay nor Philippine archipelago, nor Siam nor Cochin-China, would have sugar or tin for their exportation. Of the first they are the sole producers; of the latter they produce about 8000 tons. Hence it will appear that at Singapore there is no apathetic population indigenous to the soil to be nursed, but one composed of the two most industrious and enterprising races in the world, and who are quite competent to appreciate the advantages of a more progressive system of government. When an altered state of commercial relations with China shall have opened that vast field to European enterprise—when the trade with Siam, created by the recent treaty, and already rapidly growing, has become more fully developed—when,

under the skilful administration of its European rulers, the resources of a large portion of Borneo find their way into the English market—when the Malay peninsula, extensively peopled by industrious Chinese, furnishes its important and valuable produce—when, in fact, from these and other sources, the whole trade of the East has increased tenfold—it will be found that the importance of Singapore has not been over-estimated. In the mean time, we may be permitted to hope that those changes which have taken place in the administration of that eastern Empire of which Singapore forms a portion, may exercise a beneficial influence upon this valuable commercial emporium.



Malay Sampan