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George Earl

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ART. I.—*Narrative of a Voyage from Singapore to the West Coast of Borneo, in the Schooner Stamford, in the Year 1834, with an Account of a Journey to Montradok, the Capital of a Chinese Colony in possession of the principal Gold Mines, by GEORGE EARL, Esq. &c. &c.*

Read, 4th July, 1835.

THE voyage from which I have just returned was undertaken with the view of opening a trade with the Chinese colonies on the island of Borneo; and, that my narrative may be the better understood, I shall first give a short sketch of the situation of those colonies.

The Dutch have two small stations on the coast, one at Sambass, in latitude $1^{\circ} 25' N.$, the other at Pontiana, in latitude $0^{\circ} 2' S.$; the two being about ninety miles apart. The country between these two settlements is very rich in gold and diamond mines, and has been for many years in the possession of a strong colony of Chinese, who have kept themselves independent, notwithstanding many attempts of the Dutch to get possession of the mines. They are now at peace, and the Dutch, being masters at sea, will not allow any trade on the coast, except at Sambass and Pontiana; so that the Chinese are obliged to import and export every thing through these ports, paying very high duties.

It was to open a direct trade with Sinkawan, the principal seaport town of the Chinese, that this voyage was undertaken. Our cargo consisted principally of opium, tea, and piece-goods: and I was provided with two interpreters; one who understood the Tartar dialect spoken there, which the other was to interpret to me in Malay.

We left Singapore on the 1st of March, and arrived on the coast of Borneo on the 7th, having had fine weather across the China sea. We made the land to the southward of Point Batublat, in latitude $0^{\circ} 45' N.$ where a group of large islands lies close to the coast, pre-

senting no danger under water, although several small rocks, which are always dry, make it awkward to run in during the night, particularly as they are not yet surveyed. We, however, ran through these islands, and brought up off the coast in seven fathoms, at twelve at night.

As the places which I had to call at are not mentioned in any chart, I was under the necessity of searching for some town or village where I might be able to procure information. The coast is low and woody, having thick, swampy jungle near the sea, with numerous creeks, so that the inhabitants are only to be met with some distance inland; and a person, at first arriving on the coast, if not previously aware of this circumstance, would not suppose there was a human being in the neighbourhood.

At daylight, in the morning, I got out the long boat, and set off with twelve men, well armed, for a large creek lying opposite to the vessel. The water was very shallow at the mouth, but deepened inside. About a hundred yards up there was a strong barricade across the river, made of large stakes driven into the mud, having an opening of four feet wide in the middle, apparently for the passage of canoes. After being occupied for nearly an hour in enlarging this place sufficiently to allow the boat to pass clear, we proceeded; and, about half a mile further up, came to another barricade of the same kind, with a dismantled mud-fort on the bank close to it. To tell the truth, I did not altogether like the appearance of the place, particularly as the coast has rather a bad character, and this had every appearance of a pirate's nest; but, as it was absolutely necessary that we should know where we were, we pushed on up the river, although I saw some hesitation among the people, who were all Malays from Java. These people, when well led, are as brave as could be wished; but, if they see any hesitation in their leader, they lose all presence of mind, and become in a moment the greatest cowards on earth.

As we advanced, we disturbed immense numbers of monkeys as large as middling-sized dogs, whose screams and barking made the woods re-echo; many coming down the branches close to the boats, and looking as fierce as tigers. We struck at them with our cutlasses, which only made them ten times worse; and they kept following us as close as they could, much to my annoyance, as I wished to proceed as quietly as possible.

After ascending about two miles, and on rounding a point, we popped upon a little hut where two Chinamen were boiling salt from salt-water. In answer to our inquiries, they said that this river was

called Songy Ryah, and had only a small village on it; but that Sinkawan, the chief town, was three miles up a river fifteen miles to the northward of where we were. We put about immediately and returned, the monkeys still following. As I did not care now about using fire-arms, I shot a large monkey, which appeared to be the chief agitator; and he came down crashing through the trees, and fell on the bank with a noise more like the fall of a bullock than of a monkey. There was immediately a dead silence among the monkeys, and many were descending to him, when a bend of the river took us out of sight. A few of them only followed us, and they kept high up in the trees, taking extraordinary leaps from branch to branch.

On getting on board the schooner I weighed anchor, and, working through the islands to the northward, at dusk, brought up near the mouth of a river, which I supposed was the one I wanted.

Early in the morning, taking the long boat, I left the vessel, and found the river to be about the same size as the Songy Ryah. It was hardly daylight; and being very foggy, before we were aware of any thing being there, we came suddenly close up to two suspicious-looking war-práhus, which were lying in the narrow part of the mouth, and which, on seeing us, commenced beating two large gongs. As we were within range of their guns, I pushed directly up to them, and was agreeably surprised to find they were Dutch cruisers, although I would much rather that no one had been there.

The commodore was a Lingin Malay, and was stationed there by the resident of Sambass, to prevent, as I afterwards discovered, any foreign vessel or práhu from trading there. He tried all he could to dissuade me from going up the river, saying that the Chinese were very savage, and had cut off a boat belonging to a práhu a few days before. It was his duty to have prevented me, which he might easily have done, as he had sixty men, whilst I had only twelve, and the vessel, from shoal-water, could be of no assistance; but he seemed to have a dread of me, for which I could never account. Finding I was determined to go, he said he would accompany me with his boat; upon which I invited him to take a seat with me; and at last got him to do so, when, as he was completely in my power, I did not care for the men. His boat followed ours.

The river was very narrow, not wide enough to admit of the use of the long oars; we had, therefore, recourse to paddles, and, after a pull of three miles, passing several salt-boilers' nuts, we arrived at the town.

There were two small trading-práhus from Sambass, and about twenty fishing-boats, lying close to the wooden jetty where we landed. We went thence to the court-house, where the Chinese *cuensí* (magistrates) resided; when I told them what I had come for, and what I had got on board, requesting them to say whether they could or would trade with me, as I was desirous of as little delay as possible. The house kept filling fast with half-naked Chinamen, who rushed in from the town to see the Fan Qui. Each one had something to say, and tried to make himself heard above his neighbour, so that in a short time the court-house became a little Babel, and I was glad to get out of it: but, when I did so, I got into a crowd of women, who formed a compact body round me, quizzing me most unmercifully, if I might judge from their laughter; while I was facing about in all directions, trying in vain to get away from them.

Having at last cleared a passage, I proceeded to inspect the town, which consisted of a long narrow street of thatched, wooden houses, the front room of each being a shop for the sale of meat, grain, grocery, &c., intermixed with houses for opium-smoking, which are much the same kind of receptacles as our public-houses. The court-house, where the *cuensí* resided, was detached from the town, having one large public room and several small ones at the back and sides. The great room had an earthen floor, and was furnished with a great arm-chair, a table, some wooden benches, and a *loss*, or deity. It was surrounded by a low turf wall, with a gate opposite the town, near which several long janjáls, carrying balls of about one pound, were placed muzzle up, leaning against the wall. Three of these were fired as a salute to me on my return from the town; for I had come upon them so suddenly in the first instance, that they had not then time to pay me the compliment. There was still a great talk in the court-house, but it subsided as I entered; and the secretary of the *cuensí*, who appeared to be the chief among them, led me to the great chair, and put some sugar-candy and preserves before me. I could perceive that he was completely at a loss how to proceed, which, when I afterwards understood what was their form of government, did not surprise me. It appeared, from what I could collect from him, that he did not like to let me trade through fear of a breach with the Dutch; and, on the other hand, he hesitated to prevent me, through fear of a disturbance among the people, who wished, above all things, to trade with me: but he said that, if I would wait for a few days, he would send for instructions from the Chinese governor, who lived at Montradok, about

thirty-five miles in the interior, as he was unwilling to act on his own responsibility.

Seeing how undetermined he was, I decided on losing no time, but to proceed to Sambass immediately, to see what I could do there. On passing the cruise-práhus, I observed that they had sent off one of their boats, and, as I supposed, to Sambass; when, getting on board the schooner, I weighed, and made sail along the coast to the northward, with a fine sea-breeze.

In running along the coast, we could perceive several small hills a few miles inland, which appeared to be well cultivated; but the land near the sea was all swampy, and covered with an impenetrable jungle. At six in the evening we passed Stackú, which is situated on a small hilly point. This was formerly a place of considerable trade, but now it consists merely of a few huts inhabited by Chinese and Malays: most of the inhabitants were destroyed two years ago by the Dyaks, a wild people from the northward, of whom I shall say more hereafter.

At seven in the evening the land-breeze sprung up, and at midnight we arrived off Púmarkat Hill, which, as I had been informed, was situated on the south part of the entrance to the Sambass river; and, as I did not like to venture over the bar in the night, we brought up in five fathoms, about six miles off shore.

At nine the next morning, the sea-breeze setting in, we weighed, and ran in towards the mouth of the river with the long-boat a-head, sounding, keeping in mid-channel; and, in about an hour, anchored off Púmarkat, a small town inside the mouth of the river. The least water we had was nine feet, which was one foot less than our draught; but, as the bottom was soft mud, we easily ran through it. This was at half flood; at high-water and spring tides, there are sixteen or eighteen feet.

I found here two cruise-práhus, and a small schooner, having the resident of Sambass on board, who had come down to meet me. He informed me that he had orders from Batavia to allow no trade at any port on the coast but Sambass and Pontiana. I, therefore, determined to go to Sambass, which is about thirty miles up the river, and arrived there the next day.

The entrance of Sambass river is in latitude $1^{\circ} 28' N.$, being about a mile wide at the mouth, but immediately inside it increases in breadth to between two and three miles, and continues so for a considerable distance. The main branch runs in an E. N. E. direction, and is navigable for ships of considerable burden for upwards of 200 miles, and very likely for more; but I could find no person who

had ascended it further, owing to the country through which the upper part flows being inhabited by hostile tribes of Dyaks.¹

Sambass is situated on a small river which joins the main branch on the south side, about fourteen miles from the mouth. This river is narrow but deep, and is navigable up to the town by vessels of 200 tons; there being seven fathoms and upwards of water, except in one place, eight miles below the town, called Sabatu, where some rocks run nearly across the river, leaving a channel with fourteen feet at high water close to the right bank. The land near the river is swampy, and is all jungle, except a few small spots which are cultivated for rice.

On arriving off the town I saluted it with nine guns, which was returned by the fort with seven. The fort is situated near the river in the lower part of the town; it is merely a square stockade of wood, with the earth thrown up against it inside, and mounts eight long nine-pounders. The government establishment consists of a resident, a surgeon, and two officers, with about forty soldiers, half of whom are Europeans.

The Dutch have been here about eight years only. Before that time Sambass was a complete nest of pirates; and, in 1812, was fortified by the rájá, who was so bold in his depredations, that some English men-of-war were sent from Batavia, who burnt the town, and destroyed the fort, tumbling the guns into the river. The rájá, and those that escaped, went a great distance up the river, and remained there two years, before they would venture down to rebuild the town on its former site. The resident's house is built close to the old fort, where I saw a long eighteen-pounder, which was split several feet from the muzzle, a shot from one of the brigs having struck it in the mouth. All the old inhabitants have a clear recollection of the attack; indeed, many of them carry the marks of very severe wounds they received at that time.

The day after my arrival I called on the rájá, or, as he is styled by his own people, the sultán. He is the farmer of the opium which is consumed by the people of the district, no other person being allowed to sell it; indeed, it is almost his only revenue; for, though the gold-mines are within his territory, they are in the hands of the Chinese, who exceed in number the Malays in the proportion of about six to one. A few years ago the Chinese had completely the upper hand, which induced the rájá to invite the Dutch to settle there, and

¹ I was informed by one of the pangerans of Sambass, that the river was navigable by canoes to within two days' walk of Borneo Proper; but the Malays are not always to be credited.

take him under their protection. But it has been much the same to him; for, although he is nominally the head of the government, he can do nothing without the resident's permission.

In going to the rájá's house, which is situated about a mile up the river, I was obliged to use my boat, as there are neither horses nor roads in this country; the only communication between houses being by the river.

The houses in the town are very miserable, being all of wood, and covered with plank or attap leaves; many are built on floats in the river, moored to large posts. The latter sometimes break adrift, and three of them came down one night across the schooner's bows, and nearly carried her with them.

The rájá's house was of the same materials as the others, but larger. It was partly hidden by a large wooden pavilion in front, which was his audience-hall, and where I found him, seated on a mat, with a number of his *pangerans*, or petty rájás, with him.

He rose on my entrance, and led me to a chair before a European table that was in the room, himself taking another opposite. The table and chairs were the only furniture, with the exception of several globe lamps suspended from the ceiling.

The rájá was, to appearance, about fifty; but, as he was an inveterate opium-smoker, he might have been several years younger. He was tolerably well informed for a Malay, and was very inquisitive respecting the English, I being the first that he had seen. He said that, in the event of a war between England and Holland, which was then expected, the Dutch would retire from Sambass and Pontiana to Batavia. After about two hours' conversation I departed, without coming to any terms about the opium, as he said he required to sleep over every affair of importance.

Some of the *pangerans*, though young men, were completely broken down by opium-smoking. This drug has much greater effect on the Malays than on the Chinese, whose constitutions are, perhaps, better able to support it.

During my stay here, I went up the river several times with the doctor and some soldiers, in quest of an orang-outang that had been seen there several times; but, although we saw him once, the jungle was so thick that he escaped out of sight almost immediately. We, however, shot a wild hog or two every time, which kept us in good humour.

Although the orang-outang is more frequently seen here than in any other part of Borneo, yet it is very difficult to procure one; and it is almost impossible to take an old one alive. The doctor had one

about eight months old, which was nearly as helpless as an infant of that age. At a few yards' distance, as it lay on the ground, it was difficult to distinguish it from a negro child; but on nearer inspection, you could perceive a number of long silken hairs growing from the body. He was not yet weaned, and was fed with pap in the same manner as an infant; and if he did not get food when hungry, he would cry and scream till it was brought to him. I used sometimes to puff a little smoke from my cigar into his face, which would put him into a terrible passion, and make him scream and kick; but I never knew him attempt to bite. The natives say that many of the wild ones are seven feet high; but I never saw one so large.

Monkeys are very numerous, and of great variety. I do not think one-third of the different species is known to naturalists. With the exception of monkeys, badgers, and pigs, I saw no wild animals; and domestic ones are very scarce. Sheep and horses are unknown; indeed, they would be quite useless, as there are neither pastures for the one, nor roads for the other.

Rice is the principal food of the natives, but very little is cultivated; and they are dependent on Java for a supply: indeed, a Malay, when he can collect gold-dust enough in four months to supply him for the remainder of the year, is not likely to exert himself much in cultivating the earth, that being a kind of labour he detests, and to which he will not resort unless from necessity. They are, however, improving yearly; and, perhaps, in time will become an industrious people.

The Malays are decidedly a maritime race, and were formerly the carriers of this part of the East; but their commerce has been in a great measure destroyed by Europeans,—and pirating now is a very bad trade: so that their only resource is to turn sober cultivators of the earth, and as such they will, perhaps, be a happier people than they were before.

I must now say something about the Dyaks, who are the aboriginal inhabitants, and are a totally distinct race from the Malays. I have seen very few above the middle size, and they are all slightly built. In colour they are much fairer than the Malays; and many of the men appear quite white, owing to the body being covered with a kind of scale, in appearance much like the leprosy, the cause of which I could never find out. Some of them told me they did it themselves by rubbing their bodies with the juice of a tree, while others again said they were born so. I never saw any of the women so affected; indeed, many of the females are very good-looking, and the Chinese settled in Borneo frequently marry them: but I never

knew an instance of a connexion between a Dyak and a Malay; indeed, the Malays have a great contempt for them, considering them little better than orang-outangs. Those tribes that are in the neighbourhood of Sambass are, in some measure, civilised, and exchange gold-dust, which they procure in the interior, for cloth, glass beads, and tobacco, with the Malays and Chinese; but they never bring more than will supply their wants, although there is no doubt that, if they wished, they could collect a great quantity.

These people are very expert with the blow-pipe, which is a hollow cane about five feet long, through which they blow small arrows. In war-time these arrows are poisoned.

Between Sambass and Borneo Proper the Dyaks have possession of the coast; and at Serawak, about three hundred miles to the northward of Sambass, there is a trade carried on by the Borneo people for antimony-ore, which abounds in the neighbourhood; and for which the Dyaks receive in exchange red and blue cotton cloth, iron, and glass beads. With the iron they make swords, which are not unlike Turkish scimitars, the blade being narrow near the handle, and broad at the end. These they temper so exceedingly well, that I have cut a small nail in two with one of them, without the edge being injured.

These people have retained all their old customs, many of which the Dyaks in the south have left off since their collision with foreigners. One is particularly barbarous: before a young man can marry, he must present his bride with the head of a man cut off with his own hand. This is not intended as a proof of bravery; as the bridegroom may take several friends with him, and they sometimes lie concealed several days to set upon an unfortunate passer-by unawares. It might have been originally adopted as a check to the too great increase of population; but it is not continued for this reason, as they will go several hundred miles from home for the purpose of cutting off Malay práhus and fishing-boats, and securing the heads of their victims.¹

About a year and a half before I came on the coast, the Dyaks of Serassan, or the country to the northward of Serawak, scoured the whole of the coast to the southward as far as Pontiana. They were about a thousand in number; and came in canoes of from sixty to eighty feet long, hollowed out from a single tree, each canoe carrying

¹ I have remarked a custom something like this among the natives of New Holland; who, on the death of a male belonging to their tribe, will kill another belonging to an adjacent one, which, they say, preserves the balance of power between them.

about forty men. Their arms were the blow-pipe and sabre, being totally unacquainted with the use of fire-arms.

Many trading práhus on the coast were cut off by them; and the inhabitants of Stackú, a town on the sea-coast a few miles to the southward of the Sambass river, were nearly all destroyed in a night-attack. It is extraordinary that they took scarcely any thing away with them, although there was a great quantity of gold-dust and cloth in the town; being apparently satisfied with the heads of their victims. Between three hundred and four hundred people were thus destroyed in the neighbourhood of Sambass alone; and, no doubt, many práhus were cut off.

The Dutch cruise-práhus that were at the mouth of the river might, perhaps, have prevented them from passing to the southward; but, at the first news they had of their being on the coast, they immediately fled up the river, without informing the people on the coast of their danger, and not stopping till they were safe under the guns of the fort. I must mention that the crews of the práhus, though belonging to the Dutch, were all Malays.

On the north-west coast of Borneo there is another people, the Lanuns, who are a kind of sea-gypsies, living entirely on the water, in práhus of from thirty to sixty tons' burden. During the north-east monsoon they remain among the islands on the coast, shifting their berths, as suits their convenience, for fishing, &c.; but in the south-west monsoon they divide themselves into small fleets, and spread themselves over the seas, some going to the Malay peninsula, others to the different straits between Borneo and Sumatra, and others to the coast of Java, where they lie concealed among the islands, ready to attack any vessel or práhu they think they can master—taking care that the odds in their favour be never less than ten to one. The Europeans who are so unfortunate as to fall into their hands are almost always murdered; but the natives whom they take they sell for slaves. These people seldom attack a square-rigged vessel, except during a calm, and when their numbers are immensely superior. They then row up within shot, and attack with brass swivel-guns; but as long as a brisk fire is kept up from the vessel, they seldom come close, and if a lucky shot happens to sink one of the práhus, they in general retire. During a strong breeze at sea, they lie under a great disadvantage, as their práhus are unweildy, bad sailers, and roll about very much when there is a heavy sea. The Java captains sometimes take advantage of this to retaliate: and it is known that more than one fleet has been cut off in detail, without one surviving to tell the story. They are not now so numerous as formerly.

These pests are of Malay extraction, and frequently make the Malay prisoners they take fight with them. When they go on a cruise, they leave their women behind them in charge of a number of práhus. These are well able to defend themselves, which is necessary, as they are liable to attacks from the Dyaks.

At Sambass, the chief revenue of the Dutch is raised by a monopoly of salt, which they import from Samanap, in the island of Madura. No individual person is allowed to import salt, or sell it, under heavy penalties; and if the offender is a native, besides an enormous fine, he will suffer a long imprisonment. It is sold by the government at the rate of seven rupees per picul of 133 lbs.; and as it costs them, when delivered, less than a rupee, the profit must be immense. The sultán is the only person allowed to trade in opium, so that he can charge what price he pleases; and this drug is an absolute necessary with all the Chinese, as well as those Malays who can afford to purchase it. The government receive, also, a duty on tea and tobacco; but since the 1st of January, 1834, all other goods are free of duty. Two junks arrive yearly from China.

Gold-dust and diamonds are the only exports. The gold-dust is made up in paper packets of two dollars' weight, the value of which, according to the touch, is from twenty-seven to twenty-nine Spanish dollars. It is tedious receiving a great sum, as it is necessary to open, examine, and weigh each packet; a yellow, glittering sand, called *passir bruny*, being often mixed with it. Diamonds I had nothing to do with, having very little knowledge of them, which I regretted much, as I am certain many valuable ones might have been procured here. The gold I received here was not so good, nor so well cleaned, as that I afterwards received from the Chinese government at Montradok.

During my stay at Sambass, the resident gave a dinner to the sultán and all the pangerans, so that I had an opportunity of seeing all these gentlemen together. His highness was shewn every honour, being saluted, on passing the fort, with eleven guns, and placed at the head of the table, supported by the resident and Lieut. Fewler; the other end being occupied by the commandant, the doctor, and myself, who were the only other Europeans present: the two sides were filled by the pangerans, to the amount of about twenty.

The table was inconveniently high, so that the smallest of these noblemen—and they are all very diminutive¹—could scarcely see

¹ I have remarked here, as well as at many other Malay places that I have visited, that the rájás are much inferior, both in size and intellect, to the poorer classes; which, I think, may be attributed to an immoderate use of opium for several generations.

what was on it ; which, together with their unskilfulness in the use of the knife and fork, must have made their meal any thing but a comfortable one.

After dinner we were entertained with dancing and plays. The music was Javanese, which is very sweet, though rather monotonous ; and the dancers, who were all girls, kept excellent time : but their performance can never be pleasing to a European. The play, if it can be called such, was a continuation of extempore buffoonery, carried on by several men dressed most grotesquely, with hideous masks on. The one who yielded most amusement was an active little man, dressed like a monkey, whose chief employment appeared to be in annoying his brother-performers to the utmost of his skill and power. The person who represented the unfortunate princess, who was the only female performer, was his chief butt. The dialogue had frequently great point ; but I lost much of it, owing to the Sambass Malay being sometimes spoken instead of the high Malay.

After a great deal of trouble, I at last got permission from the resident to dispose of the remainder of my cargo at Sinkawan ; and on the 15th of April we weighed with the ebb-tide, and dropped down the river. At Púmankat, I found a Sampan packet from the Straits, which had been seized by the resident at Songy Ryah, near Sinkawan, for trading with the Chinese there. She was manned with thirty Chinese, and had a cargo on board worth upwards of ten thousand dollars. She was afterwards condemned and sold by auction.

I arrived off Sinkawan on the 18th, and went ashore immediately after bringing to. I found a letter at the court-house for me from the governor of Montradok, who had expected my coming, inviting me to Montradok, where he would call all the *cuensi* together, and arrange the plan for the trade to be carried on. I joyfully accepted the invitation, as I had a great wish to see the gold-mines ; and, having heard at Sambass that the Chinese allowed neither European nor Malay to go into the interior, I had had little hopes of being able to do so. I accordingly despatched the boat on board for my gun and a few necessities, intending to start at daylight the next morning : but I heartily regretted my determination to sleep on shore, for the sun had no sooner set than myriads of mosquitoes attacked me. My clothes were no protection ; and what annoyed me most was to see the Chinese sitting quite unconcernedly in the midst of them : they must have been either mosquito-proof, or gifted with the firmness of stoics.

I got up at daybreak, and commenced the journey immediately ; as every thing had been prepared over night. I was accompanied by six of the *cuensí* men, each of whom carried a large paper umbrella, and a long tobacco-pipe, my two Chinese interpreters, and two *kúlís* for carrying the baggage. We were all on foot, for there are no horses in the country, and, if there were, the roads are of a nature that would prevent their use. The first five miles were in an easterly direction, through a swampy jungle, the path in many places being upon trees that had been felled for the purpose, and laid length ways, their ends touching each other. They were quite round, and very slippery, and did very well for the bare feet of the Chinese ; but, before the first mile had been completed, my feet slipped from under me, and I had an opportunity of trying the depth of the mud, which was considerably higher than my knees. I was pulled out by the united efforts of three Chinamen.

After crossing the swamp, we ascended a rising ground, and a sudden turn of the road brought to view one of the finest prospects I had ever seen ; and which was not the less pleasing from being totally unexpected. Immediately below us lay a large valley in a state of the highest cultivation, covered with villages and cottages ; and the Sinkawan river, here about fifteen yards wide, winding through it. The south-east side was bounded by some high woody hills, but to the north-east the ground was gently undulating as far as the eye could reach. Our path lay through a number of gardens, which, besides many kinds of culinary vegetables, grew sugar-cane, Indian corn, and plantains. After a delightful walk through the valley of about three miles, crossing the river several times, we arrived at the town where we were to breakfast, at eight o'clock. The street through which we had to pass was crowded with people, many of them women ; who, stepping aside, left a small space in the centre for us to pass through to the court-house. From the curiosity and surprise of these people, I am convinced most of them had never seen a European before ; and, as the town was too small to contain the third of them, I suspect the greater part belonged to the villages in the neighbourhood. I found the *cuensí* had prepared an excellent breakfast, as they had been informed of my coming by a messenger, who had been sent to Montradok the night before.

A few miles past the town we crossed several trenches about three feet wide, and from three to fifteen feet deep ; which, to my surprise, I found were exhausted gold-mines. I had expected that the mines were on the hills to the south-east of the valley, not being aware that gold would be found in the low ground, except

such as was washed down by the rivers. The soil in which these trenches were dug was red, and rather poor, but not so much so as to be incapable of cultivation; for, in the neighbourhood, the rice-fields looked very well.

We continued crossing these trenches for about six miles, the ground still gently undulating, and the distance between them being sometimes not twenty yards, and at other times nearly half a mile. We then struck to the south-east, over a number of hills covered with trees, the valleys between them being generally cultivated, till one o'clock, when we descended the last hill, and had a view of the whole of the valley of Montradok below us. It appeared well cultivated, and it was easy to trace many of the exhausted trenches from the dark lines they formed in the green rice, winding through the valley like snakes, the ends being lost in the distance. The scene was improved by a small lake about half-way between us and Montradok, which I found, on approaching, to be artificial, being formed by a dam thrown across a valley, through which ran a small stream. The water is collected here for the purpose of giving it sufficient force to wash the gold when required.

We arrived at Montradok at three o'clock, having walked about thirty-five miles. I was very tired, not having lately been much accustomed to walk any distance. I might have been carried, if I had liked, on a kind of bamboo sedan, which, together with *kúlís* to carry it, might have been procured at any time on the road; but I did not like to acknowledge myself tired, more particularly as I had joined in the laugh against my two people, both of whom were knocked up before they had proceeded half-way, and had to be carried in the manner just mentioned. They did not arrive at Montradok till two hours after me.

I passed through the town, which consisted of only one street, about three-quarters of a mile long, to the governor's house, which was about a quarter of a mile beyond the town, and was distinguished as well by its superior size as by a tall young tree which had been stuck up in front of it. His excellency, with the *cuensí*, met me at the yard-gate, though it was raining hard, and honoured me with a salute of three guns, one of which kept fizzing for about five minutes before it went off. Three is a regular Chinese salute; and I never heard that they any where give either more or less. He did not understand a word of Malay; so we were unable to converse till the interpreters came, which I was not sorry for, as fatigue had by no means impaired my appetite; and I had plenty of time before their arrival, both for an attack on the good cheer, and to change

my clothes, which were drenched with the rain that had been pouring down for the last half-hour.

I shall now endeavour to give some idea of the people and government: the latter, being strictly republican, is rather a curiosity in this part of the world, and the equality of all ranks is sufficient to satisfy the most determined leveller.

The Chinese here are all of the tribe that forms the lowest class about Canton; and, I believe, are of Tartar origin. They are as dark as Malays, and very spare in the body. I did not see one stout man amongst them. This, however, may be owing to their way of living; for most of the women—that is, those born in China—are the reverse: but I found out, before I left, that the ladies sometimes indulge a little in opium-smoking, as well as their husbands; though the practice is far from being general, and those that use it are as easily distinguished as if they had it written in broad characters on their foreheads. They have great liberty here, quite as much as females in England; and I could perceive, in more than one house, that the “gray mare was the better horse.” Pork is the principal animal food. They have, also, plenty of fish, with excellent rice and vegetables; of the latter, I have seen twenty different kinds used at one meal. *Samshú*, an ardent spirit distilled from rice, is used in considerable quantities during dinner, but seldom at any other time.

The dress of the men that labour in the fields or mines is merely a pair of cotton drawers; but the shopkeepers, and those that have no occasion for manual labour, wear a loose pantaloon, with a *baju*, or frock, with wide sleeves, buttoned in front.

The females use precisely the same dress; but, when going out of doors, in wet weather, they put on a wooden shoe, about three inches thick in the sole, which gives their feet a very different appearance from the cramped extremities of the females of the upper class in China.

There seemed to be little distinction of rank; for the *kúlís* who carried my baggage sat down to eat at the same mat with the governor, and frequently dipped their chop-sticks into the same dish: but he always sat at the upper end, and never had occasion to rise to procure *samshú*, which was in general poured out by the women, who always eat with the men.

The governor was the only man to whom I saw any respect shewn, and I think this was owing more to his abilities than to the dignity of the situation he held. To the *cuensí*, or representatives, little or no respect is shewn. The form of government approaches very near to the republican. The country is divided into districts, each of which

contains a town or large village, having, according to the population, from two to five representatives, who are chosen by vote, each male inhabitant, rich or poor, having a vote. They continue in office as long as suits the pleasure of their constituents; who, on suspicion of bad conduct, will depose the obnoxious member, or members, and elect others in their room. On these occasions, I have every reason to believe that there are sometimes serious popular commotions.

These representatives are called "*cuensí*," and have the administration of justice in their respective districts; but capital offences are always referred to the governor, from whose sentence there is no appeal. The *cuensí* of the districts elect the governor, whose office is no sinecure, as he conducts all the affairs of the settlement. The present functionary has been in office upwards of ten years; he is likewise a soldier, and was general of the forces during the war with the Dutch. He is a man of good natural abilities, and it was through his exertions alone that the settlement was freed of its enemies; and, being a great favourite with the people, his power is absolute. He is, however, politic enough to call the *cuensí* together before deciding on any business of importance, although it always goes according to his wishes. Indeed, he is the only man I saw who had any ideas beyond the common affairs of life; and I was told by one of the *cuensí* of Sinkawan, who was rather more gifted than his compeers, that he was afraid the settlement would go to wreck if anything should happen to the present governor, for that there was not another man amongst them who had abilities to conduct their affairs, or authority to restrain the people.

The gold-mines that are at present worked lie about four miles, in an easterly direction, from Montradok, in the same kind of red, stiff soil, as the exhausted ones that I have before mentioned. The veins are very small, and near the surface, being seldom deeper than fifteen feet, and in general considerably less. The ore is procured by digging with spades and mattocks, the soil which contains the metal being carefully taken up and removed in close baskets to the place where it is to be washed. This is done in the dry season, and nearly all the male population are employed at it. When the rains set in, the chief part of the people return to their plantations, leaving only a certain number who are well skilled in washing the gold. The bulk of the soil is removed by turning a strong stream of water through a large wooden trough, in which the whole is put; after which the remainder of the soil is removed by washing in smaller vessels with the hand. It is altogether a very tedious work.

These washers smoke an enormous quantity of opium; and, when

I visited the washing-place, I saw a great number of them lying on the platforms erected for the purpose, some smoking through a bamboo, others, who had finished their debauch, lying in a state of unconsciousness, neither sleeping nor waking. On seeing this, I was inclined to regret that by far the most valuable part of my cargo was composed of this pernicious drug; but I had a kind of consolation in knowing, that, if I had not brought it, they would procure it by some other means; for it is become, with many of them, so absolutely necessary that they cannot live without it. The correctness of this remark I had an opportunity of witnessing on my passage from Singapore to the coast; having two Chinese on board, who were old opium-smokers. They were aware that I would allow no smoking on board, and I had some curiosity in watching the effect it would have on them. The first day they were very restless and uncomfortable, but afterwards appeared quite resigned. This surprised me, as I was aware that they could not smoke on board without being observed; subsequently, however, I found out that they had resorted to the expedient of chewing the drug, which method of using it, though not so good as smoking, had much the same effect on the senses.

I could not learn exactly the proportion in which the gold, after being washed, is distributed; but it is nearly as follows:—The governor and *cuensí* have one fourth for the expenses of government and keeping the dams in order. Of the remainder, the share of the washers is two-thirds greater than that of the labourers who have been employed only a few months in digging the ore; but the gold in general comes into the hands of the merchants and opium-sellers, who purchase the shares at a risk before the gold is washed, and, sometimes, make an immense profit, though at others they may be losers.

The gold is in general very small, being, for the most part, as fine as sand; and I never saw a piece heavier than a sixpence. The dust belonging to the *cuensí* is always better cleaned than any other; and, when it is put up in tials or packets, they stamp a mark on the paper envelope. The punishment for adulterating the dust thus marked, or for forging the stamp, is no less than cutting off the right hand of the offender, which is done immediately on conviction.

I did not see the diamond mines, as they are at some distance, in the interior; but, as far as I could learn, they are found in veins in the same manner as gold, and at the same depth. I saw many diamonds here in the state in which they were procured from the mines. They were covered with incrustations of clay, so hard that they can be removed with a hammer only. A stranger would take them for mere red stones, not supposing they could contain any thing precious.

The rice grown here is of an excellent quality, and very cheap, being at little more than half the price at which it is sold at Singapore. I would gladly have bought a cargo, but it is not allowed to be exported even to the Dutch and Malay settlements in the neighbourhood; so that I could procure only a few piculs for the ship's use.

The houses in Montradok are very small, and are all made of wood and attaps: I did not see one edifice of stone, brick, or any other such substantial material, in the whole settlement, nor any temple or house of worship. While at Montradok, an old man came into the room, and lighting a few small chop-sticks, made some motions before an image of their deity; after which he placed the lighted sticks in a cup, and retired as silently as he had entered, the other persons in the room not taking the least notice of him. I have mentioned before that the Chinese sometimes intermarry with the Dyaks. I saw several of these people here, both male and female; it being the custom of the Chinese, when they marry one, to take the parents, and sometimes the whole family, under their protection; and they do not lose by it, for a few weeks' labour is enough to provide food for the whole year. The Dyaks are supposed by them to be descendants of a Chinese colony, planted many centuries ago on the north coast of Borneo; but, for my part, I suspect the Dyaks to be as ancient a people as the Celestials themselves. It is difficult to distinguish a female when dressed *à la Chinoise*, from a Chinese woman, the former being equally fair, but not so inclined to corpulency. I always remarked, that if a Dyak woman happened to come under my observation, she would appear greatly confused; so much so, that it was painful to see it, while the others were as bold as could be, and would stare me out of countenance. I saw one female Albino who was remarkably fair, and had eyes as red as a ferret's. She shut them on perceiving that I noticed her; and, had it not been for one of the Chinamen, who, in a most ungallant manner, pulled them open with his fingers, I should have passed without seeing them. She was about nineteen or twenty, and appeared in good health, but could see best in the twilight, the glare of the sun being too powerful. I have seen Batta, Malay, and Javanese Albinos, but this female had the fairest complexion of all.

My quarters at Montradok were not of the first order; but my host spared no pains to make me as comfortable as he could. The musquitos were not so numerous as at Sinkawan, though, I think, much fiercer. However, having good musquito curtains, I did not find them very troublesome.

The forenoon after my arrival was spent in examining the gold-mines and washing-place in the neighbourhood; and I returned to

the house about noon, where I found all the *cuensi* from the neighbouring districts, and one from each of the more distant ones assembled. After deliberating for about half an hour, they all came into my room, when the governor told me that they had agreed to open the trade, and that he would immediately send out messengers to inform the people of their determination, and of the goods that I had brought. I felt great inconvenience from being unable to converse directly with him, being obliged to use two interpreters, one of whom was a native of China, who understood the Tartar dialect spoken here, and turned it into Chinese, which the second interpreter, a Malacca Chinese, delivered to me in Malay.

Having arranged every thing before night, I determined to return to the coast at daylight next morning, much against the wish of my kind host, who was making preparations for a play, and other entertainments; but as a report had arrived that a number of Lanun práhus had been seen on the coast, I felt very anxious to be on board the vessel; as, in case of an attack from them, we should have to trust to our own exertions alone, as the cruise-práhu would take care not to shew themselves if there was any danger.

We left Montradok at break of day, and had a most fatiguing and unpleasant walk to Sinkawan; for, we had scarcely commenced our journey, when the rain descended in torrents, and continued so, with little intermission, all the forenoon. We had great difficulty in ascending some of the hills, for the water rushed impetuously down the narrow, deep-worn, footpaths; and, had it not been for the thick brushwood on each side, we should have had hard work to keep our legs. On approaching Sinkawan, I was rather alarmed at hearing great guns fired at intervals near the mouth of the river, expecting it was the pirates that I had heard of at Montradok attacking the schooner; and I was well aware, that had such been the case, it would have been impossible for me to get off to her, for neither love nor money would induce either the Chinese or the Dutch cruise-práhu to put me on board. On arriving at Sinkawan, I found my boat waiting for me; and the cockswain informed me, that a fleet of about a dozen Lanun pirates had appeared in the offing in the morning, but had passed to the southward without coming near the schooner, although they lay to, about two hours, apparently deliberating what they should do; and that the guns I heard were from the cruise-práhu I left here, and three others that had come from Sambass, which had retired inside the river, and were firing to frighten the pirates off the coast. I went on board immediately; and, as the sea-breeze was setting in, got a spring on the cable to bring her

broadside to bear to seaward, in case they should come in the evening, but I saw no more of them. They probably mistook me for a Dutch man-of-war schooner, and they very seldom meddle with each other.

I cannot go on without another remark on the cruisers. During the time the Dutch have been on the coast, there has not been a single instance of a pirate-práhu being taken by them.

The cruise-práhus carry two nine-pounders in the bow, with two or three swivel guns; they have crews of from eighteen to twenty-five Malays, and are built and rigged like Malay trading-práhus, to deceive the pirates; but, with the most absurd inconsistency, they carry large distinguishing flags during the day, and at night keep continually beating a China gong, which can be heard at a great distance; and this totally prevents any accidental rencounter with the "prompaats," as the pirates are called.

The second day after my arrival on board was the day appointed for the sale of my cargo; as, by that time, all the inhabitants who wanted any thing would have time to be at the port. In the meanwhile, the *cuensi* had requested me to dispose of nothing, as it might lead to a disturbance, through the jealousy of the country people, who would suppose that the inhabitants of Sinkawan had got hold of all the best bargains beforehand.

On the day appointed we met at the *cuensi's* house, and the crowd of expectant purchasers was large enough to gratify the most ambitious vender. After a considerable time their names were all put down, and the quantity they wanted of each article opposite their respective names; when one of their number, who, by the by, was the only one I saw who had any idea of commercial business among them, was appointed purchaser of every thing, after which it was to be divided among the rest in the proportion marked down in the list.

This was the only plan that could be adopted to prevent one of those disturbances which so frequently happen, and of which the unfortunate representatives are generally the victims; and if any person was suspected of an endeavour to monopolise any article, particularly opium, he would run great risk of losing his life. Indeed, I should very likely have got into a scrape myself, in the event of a commotion, as the only Europeans that most of them had met before me, they met as enemies; and, being proverbially blind, they might have been unable to see that I was a peaceable merchant.

It was some time before we agreed about the opium; but when that was settled, every thing else went off rapidly: and the next day (April 28, 1834) we bundled out the cargo into a fleet of fishing-

boats that had been sent off to receive it. In the evening, I took the schooner to one of the Lamúkatan islands, about ten miles from Sinkawan, where wood, water, and stone-ballast could be procured in abundance, leaving a Chinese at Sinkawan to weigh the gold-dust, which operation alone would take several days.

The island I selected for the above purpose was the innermost and northernmost of the group, called by the natives "Pulo Batublat." It is about two miles in circumference, well wooded, and I found a beautiful little stream of water running between the two hummocks that formed the island, and falling into the sea from a natural basin opposite to where the vessel lay. The tracks of pigs in the neighbourhood shewed that these animals abounded; and while the boats were watering, I went up the hill with three of the people, and in about ten minutes procured as much game as we could carry to the boat; viz., an enormous boar, and a large sow with two of her family. The boar, strange to relate, I shot in a tree. He was established in a nook formed by the branching out of an old redwood tree, which sloped so much that the ascent and descent were tolerably easy: and, from the appearance of the tree, I have no doubt he had lived there for years. I suspect we had aroused him from his sleep; for immediately after firing at the sow, I was astonished at hearing a tremendous grunting almost directly over my head, and, on looking up, saw him peeping over the side of his nest in great perplexity, apparently undetermined whether to come down or stop where he was; and before he had decided I had reloaded my rifle, and was established at the foot of the tree. He at last came out; and, when he was just on the point of making a rush down, I shot him in the head, the ball passing quite through: he tumbled down among us, his breath leaving him with a shrill roar,—for that is the only way in which I can describe the half-grunt, half-squeak, that he emitted on feeling the shot. This was the largest boar I ever saw. Having no steelyards on board large enough to weigh him, I cannot tell exactly his weight; but it was hard work for four Malays to carry him to the boat with poles. His bristles were like whalebone; and his skin was so thick, that it would have been an awkward and dangerous job for a considerable number of men to have attacked him without fire-arms.

Birds were very scarce, which did not matter much, as pigs of all sizes could be procured at any time. We destroyed no more of the large ones, as the old fellow before described was rather tough; but the small pigs were excellent. The day before I came away, I went out with some of the people to get a few to take as presents to

my Chinese friends at Sinkawan ; and, while loading my gun, I was attacked by a sow, one of whose young I had just shot. Before I was aware, she threw me down, and ran over me ; and while turning to repeat the attack, one of my people broke her back with a tomahawk, otherwise I should have come off but second best. As it was, my face was scratched, and she had put one of her feet in my eye, and bruised it severely ; but, fortunately, when making a gripe at my leg, at the commencement of the attack, my loose trousers, which she seized, saved me from a serious bite.

On the 1st of May, having completed our wood and water, we returned to Sinkawan, where I found we should be obliged to wait some days for the gold-dust, all of which had not arrived from Montradok. At last, after nearly a whole day's disputing, we came to a settlement. The *cuensí*, who had hitherto treated me so well, now endeavoured to cheat me in every way possible ; but this will not be wondered at, when it is known that the Chinese do not think it dishonourable to cheat or overreach another, either in commercial dealing or at play. After settling the different accounts, the *cuensí* made the sum total five hundred reals less than it really was. I asked the secretary to add it up again ; he did so, but still declared it was the same. I could see in a short time that they were determined to cheat me out of it ; so I got up to prepare to set off before dark, having been told in the morning, by a man born at Batavia of Chinese parents, to keep a good look out at the mouth of the river, as several bad characters had come into the town that day, who might take advantage of the narrowness of the river to intercept me when going off with the gold-dust : and, indeed, from the conduct of the *cuensí*, I have every reason to believe these people had a hand in it, and that they intended, by haggling about the five hundred reals, to detain me till night ; nor could I help thinking afterwards of the manner in which the secretary delivered me the box of gold-dust, when I took leave. " There," said he, " there is your gold in the hands of your own people ; whatever happens to it now, I call you all to witness that I will not be responsible." In reply, I merely told him that I was able to take care of it ; and should it come to the worst, that I had two men's lives in my hand, alluding to my double-barrelled gun. Indeed, I had not the least fear of them ; for I knew the people well enough to be aware that they would not attack us, when they saw we were prepared to resist. I had fourteen men well armed with muskets in the boat with me, ten of whom stood up facing both ways, while the other four pulled down the river. I am certain, that if we had been sitting down unpre-

pared, we should have been attacked, and, perhaps, cut off. Malays are proverbially treacherous, and these cowardly villains are quite as bad. They will crouch in the thick jungle to attack an unsuspecting passer-by, whom they would not dare openly to attack without the greatest odds; but, thank God, I have done with them, having no chance of getting the five hundred reals.¹ This sum being nearly 100% will detract something from the profits of the enterprise; but I shall know better how to proceed with them another time.

By six o'clock I was on board, and got under weigh immediately for Singapore; never in my life feeling more pleasure at leaving any place. The next day, the 5th of May, I passed through the Tambelan islands, a group, I think, of thirteen, the largest being about twenty-five miles round. The channel I passed through was to the southward of the great Tambelan, between that and a rocky island about a mile from it. I counted upwards of twenty *práhus* lying close to the great island, which is inhabited by about five hundred Malays, who are mostly employed in making oil from the cocoa-nut, which abounds there. It is said, likewise, to be a resort for pirates.

Being the change of the monsoon, we had light airs and calms; so we did not arrive till the 13th at Singapore, having been away only two months and a-half. I am now going to Penang, Malacca, and Achín, in Sumatra, and shall be away about four months: on my return you may expect another long account.

GEO. EARL.

P.S. The Chinese in Borneo have no idea that the gold can be cleared of the soil, or ore, by any other method than by washing;

¹ This was written soon after my departure thence, so that I have, perhaps, used stronger terms than I should when coolly looking back to the transaction. The governor of the colony is, I have no doubt, an honest man, and, I think, was not aware of the petty exactions of the *cuensi* of Sinkawan; who, besides refusing to pay me the five hundred reals above mentioned, imposed a duty on the tea and blue-cotton cloth, although I had been given to understand by the governor, when at Montradok, that they should be imported duty free. The secretary of Sinkawan, with whom I had every reason to be greatly displeased, was aware that I was in a great hurry to get away, and that I could not send a messenger to the governor at Montradok without his knowledge and permission; and, with a grasping selfishness, preferred extortion to liberality, although perfectly aware that it would throw a damp on a trade in its infancy, which would be of the greatest importance and advantage to the country to which he belonged. I have, perhaps, been hasty in accusing him of a design to rob me; but, from his suspicious conduct, I am certain that some mischief was intended, though what it was I shall most likely never know.

and when I endeavoured to explain how it was done by quicksilver, they could not understand how it was possible. The sand that is frequently mixed with it, after being put up in packets, is removed by shaking it in the bottom of a cocoa-nut shell; and the age, or touch, of the gold is ascertained by rubbing it on a smooth black pebble, which retains the mark, from the appearance of which they can judge of the touch. The gold-dust from Pahang, on the east coast of the Malay peninsula, is supposed to be the best in the eastern archipelago.