MEMOIR

OF

SIR THOMAS STAMFORD RAFFLES, F.R.S.

CHAPTER I.

Early life of Mr. Raffles—Labour and relaxations—First tastes—Appointment under the new Government of Penang—Duties there—Goes to Malacca for his health—Malay literature—Paper on the Malayan nation—Woolly-haired people scattered among them—Game of chess—Orders for the destruction of Malacca—Countermarched on his representation—Native account of the Portuguese arrival at Malacca—The Dutch—Letter from Dr. Leyden.

There is a general desire to become acquainted with the early life and habits of those who in maturity have distinguished themselves by the display of superior talents. From that knowledge we derive a practical benefit, and gain a clue which enables us to trace that most interesting subject, the course and progress of the human mind, amid the moral and the physical influences by which it may have received its bias. It is chiefly in public characters that we have adequate opportunities of engaging in such researches. The retirement of private life conceals the connecting links by which the mind gradually advances, though the same course of self-denial and vigorous perseverance may even there produce in the same proportion the same happy results.

It is on this account that some brief notices of the private life of Sir Stamford Raffles have been prefixed to what was at first intended merely as a record of the course of his public services.

It was at one time proposed to have commenced this work with a general view of the state of politics, in those regions of the East where the subject of this Memoir first became known, and soon afterwards rose to very high station. But when it was considered, that the interest of such remote scenes almost invariably depends upon that of the incidents which are connected with individual persons, it was deemed most advisable to commence from the birth of him who is the immediate subject of the narrative.
2 EARLY LIFE.

Thomas Stamford Raffles was born at sea, on board the ship Ann, off the harbour of Port Morant, in the Island of Jamaica, July 5, 1781. He was the only surviving son of Benjamin Raffles, one of the oldest captains in the West India trade out of the Port of London. His paternal grandfather held a situation in the Prerogative Office, Doctors' Commons, with unblemished reputation, for a long course of years.

Little beyond this is known of his family. The name frequently occurs in the oldest registers at Beverley in Yorkshire, both in those of the minster and St. Mary's church, from which it appears that three centuries ago his ancestors resided there, and of one of them it is recorded that he died during his mayoralty in that borough. From thence it is believed they removed to Berwick upon Tweed; and at length, in the time of Mr. Raffles' great grandfather, to London.

Mr Raffles was baptized at Eaton Bishop, in Herefordshire, whilst his mother was on a visit to the Reverend John Lindeman, her brother, who was at that time the incumbent of the living.

In his childhood, and in his early youth, he displayed a thoughtfulness, and a closeness of application above his years, and which many of his friends now remember as the first indications of that vigor of mind, and that devotion to whatever demanded the exertion of his powers, by which in after life he was so eminently distinguished.

What education he obtained was chiefly under Dr. Anderson, who for many years kept a respectable academy at Hammersmith. But at the early age of fourteen he was removed from that seminary, and placed as an extra clerk in the East India House. The disadvantages which he suffered from this removal he deeply felt, and never failed to deplore. Referring to this period in his history, in a letter written many years after to his cousin, the Reverend Dr. Raffles, he says, “With regard to the attention which may be considered to have been paid by me to objects of a still more general and interesting nature, whether literary, scientific, or benevolent—I have only a few words to say. The deficiency of my early education has never been fully supplied; and I have never ceased to deplore the necessity which withdrew me so early from school. I had hardly been two years at a boarding-school, when I was withdrawn, and forced to enter on the busy scenes of public life, then a mere boy. My leisure hours, however, still continued to be devoted to favourite studies; and with the little aid my allowances afforded, I contrived to make myself master of the French language, and to prosecute enquiries into some of the branches of literature and science; this was, however, in stolen moments, either before the office hours in the morning, or after them in the evening. I look back to these days of difficulty and application with some degree of pleasure. I feel that I did all that I could. and I have nothing to reproach myself with.

“This statement will account for my deficiencies in education: and all I ever
presumed to consider myself was—a lover and admirer of all that I could reach in literature and science. The varied, important, and incessant duties of my public life have always deprived me of that calm and retirement which I have desired, and to which alone I look as the ultimate end of my ambition on earth. To qualify myself for the enjoyment of such a state, I omit no opportunity. The high stations which I have held, have enabled me to foster and encourage the pursuits of others; and if I have any merit, it has rather been as the patron of science, than in any other capacity.

He then proceeds to a rapid enumeration of his various labors and productions of a literary and scientific nature, which will be more appropriately noticed in subsequent portions of these pages. They are for the most part already before the world; and they have obtained for him a far higher rank, even amongst men of letters and of science, than that to which his own modesty allowed him to aspire.

It will be seen from this sketch, that the early youth of Mr. Raffles was a period of obscurity and labor, without friends to aid him, as well as without the hope of promotion; his family only searching for that mode of life in which he was most likely to acquire the greatest pecuniary success, without regard to the natural bias of his mind, or to the talents which he possessed. At fourteen he was chained down to the duties of an office: at this early age, and a friendless boy, it is not likely that he would at first be entrusted with much which was interesting; but his was a master mind, and soon burst its shackles, and manifested a high and noble resolve to devote itself to the good of others, and a yearning to obtain the station for which it felt itself best fitted.

His attention to his dull routine of duty was unremitting; he worked early and late; he studied, as he himself says, in stolen moments: by his extra labor at his office he obtained an addition to his salary, which was not appropriated to any selfish purpose; but all he earned was carried home to his parents, as they were at this time in difficulties. His affection to his mother was always one of the strongest feelings of his heart. At this time, with that self-denying devotion to the happiness of others, which was his distinguishing quality through life, he deprived himself of every indulgence, that he might devote to her his hard-earned pittance: and in after-days of comparative affluence he delighted in surrounding her with every comfort.

Such a sedentary life of labor was, however, ill adapted to the delicacy of his frame; and it was feared that symptoms of consumption were becoming confirmed: he was ordered to relax his exertions, and to leave his office for a time; he obeyed, and obtained a fortnight's leave of absence. The use which he made of this short period of recreation is very characteristic: he seized on the moment to indulge that love of mountain scenery so strong in most youthful minds, so happily undying and unfading in its exciting joyous feeling. He resolved to go into Wales, set off on foot, and
walked at the rate of thirty and forty miles a day, accomplished his object, and returned to his desk with restored health. As a school-boy, his garden was his delight: to this was added a love of animals, which was perhaps unequalled. It has been observed, that it is one of the characteristic properties of a great mind, that it can contract as well as dilate itself; and the mind which cannot do both, is not great in its full extent: this observation was forcibly realised in him; he spent hours in fondling and domesticating those objects of his care and attention. He entered with the most child-like simplicity into occupations and pleasures which many would consider beneath their notice: a mountain scene would bring tears into his eyes; a flower would call forth a burst of favourite poetry; it was perhaps peculiar to himself to be able to remark on his last return to England, that he had never seen a horse race, never fired a gun.

His facility in acquiring languages was extreme. He made himself master of French, with scarcely any assistance, on his first going into the India House; and as he never forgot any thing which he had once attained, he always continued to speak this language with great fluency, though he had little opportunity of practice. As an instance, in the year 1818, during his government in Sumatra, a lady was singing in his house one of Moore's Melodies, "Rich and rare were the gems she wore," when some French gentlemen present regretted that the beauties which he was so admiring were lost to them: he immediately translated the whole into French verse, much to the surprise of all present.

His taste for drawing was shewn at an early age, though he never had leisure to indulge it as he wished. In music, he was always fonder of melody than of harmony; perhaps because he did not sufficiently cultivate this delightful science.

His studies, from his facility of acquirement, were desultory; but he was always acquiring something; and was never for one moment unoccupied; later in life, if obliged by illness to relinquish his occupations, he covered his couch with papers on the first cessation of pain, and was immediately engaged, either in reading or dictating.

Little is known of his religious feelings on first entering the world. Early religious instruction was not then, perhaps, so general as at present, and he was not one of the happy few who received it; but, as he advanced in life, prosperity warmed his heart towards the God who led him forward in his course of usefulness; adversity taught him to look to another state of being for the happiness which he felt himself capable of enjoying: perhaps his most prominent feelings on this subject were humility and faith. From his first setting out in life, he gave the praise to God for all the blessings which he enjoyed, and was deeply impressed with a sense of his own unworthiness. He constantly mourned over his own weakness, and deplored his want of power to do that which he felt he ought to do, and his failure in the performance of every duty: from the earliest period he acquiesced in every privation, as the wise purpose of an Almighty Father working for His own glory, which,
HIS APPOINTMENT TO PENANG.

though mysterious to the limits of man’s understanding, would be brightly and clearly known hereafter.

Beginning life under the influence of such principles and feelings, it will not be matter of surprise, that his own exertions proved his best patron, and procured him friends, whose good opinion was at once honorable to his talents, and favourable to his advancement. Such friends, at a very early period of his connection with the East India House, he had obtained: for a vacancy having occurred in the establishment, his peculiar qualifications were allowed to secure his accession to it, notwithstanding the claims of others, who possessed an interest of which he could not boast.

The Court of Directors in 1805 determined on sending out an establishment to Penang. India seemed to open before him the field for which his ambition panted; and when the appointments for the new government were arranged, Mr. Ramsay, then secretary to the Court of Directors, aware of the peculiar fitness and talents of Mr. Raffles for office, named him to Sir Hugh Inglis, who, from this strong recommendation, and also a discovery of extraordinary qualifications, gave him the appointment of Assistant Secretary, and ever afterwards watched his progress through life with the deepest interest for his success. Mr. Ramsay, in performing this generous act, expressed his feeling in the strongest terms that, although in parting with so useful an assistant in his department, he should suffer the greatest inconvenience; that it was like the loss of a limb to him; yet he felt bound to further the views and promotion in life of one who possessed strong claims from such superior talents and amiable private character. This appointment must, in recollection, when a few short years had passed, have been as gratifying to the patron as it had already proved honorable to Mr. Raffles, and important to the service of the East India Company. Of the new establishment Mr. Philip Dundas was appointed Governor, Mr. John Oliphant, first Member of Council, Mr. Pearson, Secretary, with a long list of civilians. It is not necessary to enter here into the reasons which induced the Court of Directors to form this settlement, particularly as not one of their high-raised expectations was realized; experience soon proved that the place was unfavourably situated to attract either the European or the Indian trader; and high duties checked the natives whom the hope of gain had induced to leave their beaten track.

In the month of September, 1805, Mr. Raffles arrived at Penang, in the Company’s ship Ganges, which was commanded by Captain Harrington, a brother of the late member of council in Bengal. The progress which he had made in the Malay language, during his voyage, enabled him to enter with efficiency on the duties of his office as soon as he arrived. It gave to him those manifest advantages which an enlightened man, on his introduction to so interesting a people, must derive from the immediate interchange of ideas and feelings, and procured him the marked approbation of the Court of Directors.
The previous insight which he had acquired into the mode of preparing and arranging public records and proceedings, rendered his services in the formation of a new establishment highly valuable: but whilst he zealously devoted himself to the discharge of public duties, which, by the illness of the secretary, Mr. Pearson, were rendered unusually laborious, he still found time to pursue the study of the Eastern languages, and to prosecute his researches into his favourite science of natural history.

An extract from the journal of Captain Travers thus describes him at this period: “It was in the year 1806 I first became acquainted with Mr. Raffles, at the Island of Penang. He was then deputy-secretary to the new government, which had been recently sent out to that place. At this time, which was soon after his arrival, he had acquired a perfect knowledge of the Malay language, which he had studied on the voyage out, and was able to write and speak fluently. The details of the government proceedings, as far as related to local arrangements and regulations, together with the compilation of almost every public document, devolved on Mr. Raffles, who possessed great quickness and facility in conducting and arranging the forms of a new government, as well as in drawing up and keeping the records.

“The public dispatches were also entrusted to him; and in fact he had the entire weight and trouble attendant on the formation of a new government. This, however, did not prevent his attending closely to improve himself in the Eastern languages: and whilst his mornings were employed in his public office, where at first he had but little assistance, his evenings were devoted to Eastern literature. Few men, but those who were immediately on the spot at the time, can form any idea of the difficult task which he had to perform, in conducting the public business of such a government as existed on the first establishment of Penang as a Presidency. It would be irrelevant here to allude to, or attempt any description of the different characters of whom this government was formed, the more particularly so, as they are all now dead, but it is due to Mr. Raffles to state, that he was respected and consulted by every member of it. In his official capacity he gave most general satisfaction, whilst the settlers looked up to him for assistance and advice in every difficulty; and when he afterwards became chief secretary, the most general satisfaction was evinced throughout the Settlement.

“Being of a cheerful lively disposition, and very fond of society, it was surprising how he was able to entertain so hospitably as he did, and yet labour so much as he was known to do at the time, not only in his official capacity, but in acquiring a general knowledge of the history, government, and local interests of the neighbouring states; and this he was greatly aided in doing by conversing freely with the natives, who were constantly visiting Penang at this period, many of whom were often found to be sensible, intelligent men, and greatly pleased to find a person holding Mr. Raffles’ situation able and anxious to converse with them in their own language.”

It was at this early period (1806) that Mr. Raffles formed an acquaintance with
GOES TO MALACCA FOR HIS HEALTH.

Dr. Leyden, whose health had obliged him to quit Calcutta, and to try the effects of a voyage to Penang. He resided in Mr. Raffles' house for several months. The similarity of their pursuits, and the congeniality of their sentiments, soon led to an unreserved intimacy, which, as the knowledge of each other increased, strengthened into an attachment that was only severed by death.

In consequence of the absence of Mr. Pearson, Mr. Raffles had to perform the duties of that gentleman as well as his own, and succeeded to the office of secretary on the nomination of Mr. Pearson to a seat in council.

On the introduction of the Charter of Justice, for the purpose of establishing a supreme court of judicature, there was no professional person who could be employed as Registrar. Mr. Raffles offered to act in this capacity, and rendered most essential assistance in the duties of arranging and opening the Court.

The fatigue and responsibility attaching to the office of secretary, in the organization of a new government, in a climate which in a very short period proved fatal to two Governors, all the Council, and many of the new settlers, brought on an alarming illness. The attack was so severe, that for some time little hopes of his life were entertained. Throughout sufferings by which his strength was nearly exhausted, he evinced the utmost patience and resignation. When the disease abated, and he could be removed without danger, (1808) he was recommended to go to Malacca for the recovery of his health.

It is difficult to convey an idea of the constant and laborious duties which, at this period, he had to perform. It has already been stated, that the compilation and composition of almost every public document devolved upon him; that he had to draw up and keep all the records of the Government; and that the public despatches were entrusted to him to frame. There were no half-caste persons, as at the present day, to assist in performing the duties of transcribing, which greatly increased the labors of his office. As Registrar he had to arrange all the details of the Recorder's Court. Yet after devoting the whole of the day to these public duties, it was observed at the time that he passed his evenings in the study and acquisition of Eastern literature. Trifles often denote the peculiarity of character which distinguishes the individual from the surrounding crowd; and a circumstance which occurred during Mr. Raffles' visit to Malacca, developed the leading features of his disposition—the forgetfulness of self, the determination to sacrifice every private consideration to a sense of public duty,—the activity and energy of mind which overcame every difficulty that obstructed his course.

*Whilst he was thus usefully employing himself, and improving his health, a circumstance occurred which proves his zeal and assiduity as a public servant; a ship arrived at Malacca from Penang, bringing intelligence of her having left a vessel

* Extract from Captain Travers' Journal.
in the harbour about to proceed to England. Mr. Raffles, knowing the necessity of sending despatches by the first opportunity, and well aware that in his absence the Government would find great difficulty in preparing them, determined on proceeding there without delay, although strongly urged to remain whilst his health was so fast improving; but it was impossible to dissuade him from what he thought to be a public duty; and, at any risk or inconvenience, he was resolved on going. At the moment there was no vessel in Malacca roads going to Penang, nor any which could be hired for the purpose; but still so determined was he on proceeding, that at length he got a pleasure-boat, formerly the long-boat of an Indianman, and in this small craft he went, and reached Penang in good time to relieve Government from a weight of care and anxiety, which I believe were freely acknowledged at the time."

It was during this visit to Malacca that Mr. Raffles first enjoyed the opportunity of observing, and joining with the varied population congregated from all parts of the Archipelago, and from the distant countries of Asia; from Java, Amboyna, Celebes, the Moluccas, Borneo, Papua, Cochin China, China Proper, &c.

With many he conversed personally, with others through the medium of interpreters. To this early habit, which he always retained, of associating with the natives, and admitting them to intimate and social intercourse, may be attributed the extraordinary influence which he obtained over them, and the respect with which they always received his advice and opinions.

The knowledge which he thus acquired of the different products of the neighbouring countries, of the nature and extent of their trade, of their customs, manners, and feelings, greatly assisted him in the discharge of those high and responsible duties to which he was subsequently called.

The following extract of a letter of the Governor of Penang evinces the importance attached to his services, by the authorities of that settlement. (1808.)

**To Mr. Raffles,**

"A thousand thanks to you for your kind letters which I had the pleasure to receive some days ago, and hearing then that there was a small vessel sailing for Malacca, I wrote you a few hurried lines by her, to inform you of the arrangement I had made for your coming back in the event of your not meeting with a better conveyance. The Scourge sailed five days ago, and is to call at Galangore and Siak, before she goes to Malacca. Captain Barrett is desired to place himself under your orders whenever he arrives, and unless a more favorable conveyance offers, I sincerely hope you will find yourself well enough to come back to us in the Scourge.

"It is distressing to me, my dear Sir, to be under the necessity of stating in this pointed manner, the unavoidable exigence of the case, but such is the case, that we shall not be able to make up any despatches for the Court without your assistance."
MALAYS.

This is truly hard upon you, under the present circumstances of your delicate state of health, but I trust you will believe that nothing else would induce me to press so hard on you at this time. And with the exception of Mr. Phillips, the rest of the board can give but little assistance in making out the general letter; none, however, so little as myself."

Soon after the formation of the settlement of Penang, Mr. Dundas, the Governor, received from Mr. Marsden, Author of the History of Sumatra, a letter which contained some queries on the subject of Malayan literature. These were immediately referred to Mr. Raffles, as the person best qualified to answer them; and in consequence of Mr. Dundas enclosing the following letter of reply, a correspondence was commenced between Mr. Raffles and Mr. Marsden, which continued until Mr. Raffles' return to England in 1816, when a personal acquaintance led to an intimacy of friendship, which was never interrupted.

**To the Honourable P. Dundas.**

"*Penang, July 6, 1806.*

"*Dear Sir,*

"I should have taken an earlier opportunity of communicating with you on the subject of Mr. Marsden’s letter, which you were pleased to refer to me, if I had not expected a few leisure hours, in which I could have given sufficient attention to his queries to reply to them with the satisfaction I desired.

"Another reason prevented my replying to your flattering reference: I had planned a short excursion of a few days to Queda, and expected from the observations I might make there, to have confirmed several particulars respecting the Malays, which I could have communicated to Mr. Marsden.

"In this also I have been disappointed, from the circumstance of Mr. Pearson’s having obtained leave of absence from the Presidency at the very time I intended applying to you for permission to go to Queda. The length of time Mr. Pearson may be absent, and the little prospect I now have of the leisure which I so anxiously desire, can alone induce me, at this time, to hazard my inexperienced opinions on any subject connected with Oriental literature.

"On the interesting subject of the Chronology of the Malays, I fear but little light will be thrown from the discovery of their using a cycle in their dates. I am convinced of the justness of Mr. Marsden’s conclusion, that the cycle amongst the Malays has been adopted from the Siamese.

"I have not, however, observed in any of their books that the cycle alluded to is used with the religion of Mahomet; the epoch of the Hegira has been introduced, and with the Arabian months and days is universally used in their manuscripts.

"The first I knew of their using a cycle, or particular names for their years,
WOOLLY-HAIRED RACE.

was from a very old MS., half in Buggese, half in the Malay or Arabic character, in which were inserted the Relika or times, (lucky and unlucky), with tables for computing time, according to the Mahomedan calendar.

"The Siamese, I believe, in conformity with the Indians in general, as well as the Chinese, have a cycle of 60 years, containing five lesser cycles of 12 years each. Loubec, I make no doubt, in his embassy to Siam, states in what way these cycles are computed; and I regret I have not his work, or any other guide, to correct and assist me in tracing the exact similitude between the Siamese cycle and those alluded to as used by the Malays. That the names for the years used by the Malays are borrowed from the Siamese is evident.

"Of the Menangkabus, after a good deal of inquiry, I have not yet been able decidedly to ascertain the relation between those of that name in the Peninsula and the Menangkabus on Pulo Percha. The Malays I have met affirm, without hesitation, that they all come originally from Pulo Percha: the circumstance of the nation of that name in Sumatra being so great and ancient, leaves but little doubt, however, on my mind, that the nation (if any) hardly known on the Peninsula, must have emigrated from thence, although the contrary may, as we are at a loss to account for the former, appear at first sight most probable.

"I hope I may hereafter have it in my power to furnish Mr. Marsden with still further additions to his Semang Vocabulary, although I am not much inclined to think that from this nation, or rather race of men, much interesting information can be derived, beyond that of their actual existence and extent.

"The men are said to wear a small piece of the bark of a tree, tied with a string above the hips. The women wear leaves sewed together in the form of a short petticoat from above the hips to half way down the thighs. They are decidedly Caffres, or people with woolly hair—to appearance a distinct race in every respect from the Malays, from whom they cannot have in any probability descended. Those inhabiting the skirts of the woods have considerable intercourse with the Malays, but never leave the woods, unless taken by force, which they sometimes are, and sold as slaves. Many of these, from their holding communication with the Malays, speak that language tolerably well; but the language of these people is considered by the Malays as a perfect jargon. Their talking is by the Malays looked upon as the chattering or chirping of large birds, and bears no similitude whatever to their own. They are found very useful; if the Malay is in want of deer, herbs, particular woods, or the like, from the interior of the forests, he goes into the skirts, generally alone, directing his course towards the interior: as he advances he blows a kind of horn, when the Caffre, if near at hand, and in the habit of meeting him, cautiously approaches, and agrees to bring whatever is required by the Malay, from whom he receives in return a small quantity of pounded cocoa-nut, or patches of cloth; but he is remarked never to take rice, or the articles of food generally used by the Malays;