

LETTERS FROM THE EAST.—RECENT ACCOUNT OF THE
STATE OF SINGAPORE.

THE following account of Singapore, contained in a very recent letter from a visitor to that settlement, will be, no doubt, new to many of our readers :

Singapore, 10th of November, 1827.

I HAD got thus far without experiencing much benefit from the change of air; but a short residence on this most delightful island completely re-established my impaired health, and I have been enabled to enjoy myself, during the stay of the ship, much more than I could possibly have expected.

The numerous and, in many points, exaggerated reports of the capabilities and conveniences of this far-famed emporium, rather induced me, at first acquaintance, to feel some disappointment. This soon wore off; and, as it gradually disappeared, the new formed town, with all its concomitant business-like scenes of activity and industry, rose progressively into a place of no mean aspect, even to my unbiassed mind. It will not bear, it is true, any comparison with the appearance of our great commercial towns of the western hemisphere; nor has it to hide its diminished head when mentioned with Indian ports.

A large number of the houses are built of brick and stone, in a very superior style; the second and more numerous class are wood, with tiled roofs. The bazaar, in appearance, in bustle, and compact arrangements, far excels that of Penang; the revenue exceeds it proportionally. In climate, the inhabitants are peculiarly fortunate; the average of 78° of temperature is hardly to be expected, in lat. 1° 18', which is that of Singapore; farther than this, the nights are always cool and refreshing. Here are no such things as sleepless nights after hot, grilling days; the sea and land breezes alternately cool the air.

I have been informed, that seventy-nine Chinese junks, from 100 to 800 tons, 120 Bugis boats, from fifty to 150 tons, and Malay and other boats of the Archipelago, too numerous to mention, with twenty European ships and square-rigged vessels, have been seen, at various times, in the roads together, navigated by different nations, and trading, under the vigilance of the police establishment, in perfect harmony.

The smallest boat in use here, only ten feet long by one foot broad, and pulled with a double paddle, by one man, can traverse in perfect safety the roads of Singapore, at all seasons of the year; affording safe and good anchorage for the fleets of all the world!

Here the Chinese, Choliahs, Malays, Bugis, Javanese, Ar

and various other tribes, live together, peaceably and quietly, under their European masters. A few cases of desperate revenge, peculiar to the Malayan race, have occurred; but it is, indeed, wonderful to see such unanimity prevailing generally among such different tribes; it must and can only be ascribed to the efficiency of the police, which has been for years under the direction of a gentleman of the Civil service, eminently qualified for any office of responsibility and trust. It would be hardly worth adding my mite to the general voice in his favour; he is decidedly the flower of the Penang service, which has been doomed for years to labour in obscurity, and to experience nothing but neglect and slight from those who are placed over it.

Various improvements, which had been projected by Mr. Fullerton, such as fortifications on a large scale, roads across and over the island, &c. &c., had been put a stop to before my arrival. The Government, it appears, considered Mr. Fullerton's staff large enough for 10,000 instead of 2000 men. A number of bullocks for the artillery, which, by the bye, could have been of very limited service, and would not have thriven, are countermanded. The Governor thus crippled, poor man! is determined, it seems, to enjoy his *otium without*, instead of *cum dignitate*, and means to take up, for the future, his quarters at Malacca; which has, from its territorial capabilities, and consequent powers of affording pasturage for his (as applied to the straits) illegitimate child, *land-tax*, been always his favourite, preferring it before Penang or Singapore. He will be here in the middle of his flock; and, as far as I can learn, his retirement from the *extremes* of his mis-managed province will be looked upon as little short of a blessing.

His hands, if not in blood, are stained in the dye (lake) of patronage; not supporting and protecting those who deserve it, but lavished indiscriminately on his friends and connexions, whether fit for his gifts or not; it is not the wants of the service, but those of his friends that are considered. No barrier is insurmountable to that genius which clearly demonstrated that going to the expense of five rupees a month was cheaper than paying for the same time at the rate of only two!!

The system of extortion which had been found to work on the rich plains of India, in the shape of land revenue, was transplanted into the poor and barren soil of the Malayan peninsula, by the Governor, Mr. Fullerton. It appears to me to present an appearance very similar to the effect which might be expected to result from the introduction pretty generally of the *upas-tree* (if we may believe the description of it); destroying vegetation in the bud, and, if persevered in, likely to depopulate the whole of the interior of the island, occupied by agriculturists. There is, at least from what I heard openly and generally spoken, very little security to be had for property; for it is, at any time, in the power of Government to

resume, and dispose of, to others, such ground as they may please to term 'land of unfulfilled contract.'

Some gentlemen, residents in the island, had secured small lots of ground, at considerable expense, for building houses on, the only recommendations of which were their sea-ports: a narrow slip of ground between them and the sea, which had been appropriated to an evening drive and parade, not deep enough to build upon, and which, it was understood, at the time the above gentlemen occupied their lots, would *always remain open*, and which had remained so for years, the Inspector-General (a fine name) proposed *to dispose of*, forsooth, because it was likely to fetch money. It is to be hoped, that such an act of injustice may not be effected, and that the Supreme Government, whose eyes, for the sake of once-flourishing Singapore, we do hope are opened, will take into their own hands the helm which Mr. Fullerton is evidently unable to manage. The very unnecessary increase of troops, since the Bengal Establishment was replaced by Madras troops, together with the more expensive nature of the soldiers, has more than *doubled* the heretofore too extravagant demands of the Eastern settlements on the treasury of Bengal.

A few hundreds did formerly, where thousands, since the introduction of Mr. Fullerton's staff, and the Inspector-General's department, will not do now. Many of the acts of this Government, so disgraceful when viewed by themselves, are, no doubt, owing to the difficulties into which the fundamental error of *no council* has led them. To please his own ambition, Mr. Fullerton got the counsellors divided and sent away, so as never to have more than *one* to sit with him: thus, by asserting his right to the *casting vote*, he became independent; and thus, left to his nod, the Honourable Company have allowed their constituents to feel the effect of his mis-management and extravagance, to the tune of many thousands.

The Madras troops had scarce arrived to replace the Bengal forces, which were represented as dearer and more difficult to manage, when one corps refused to obey orders, and *got their own way* on the subject of *provisions*; and it was clearly proved, and made as plain as A B C, that a wrong calculation, and wilful misrepresentation had been made to the Supreme Government.

Sooner or later, truth will out:

'Ex fumo dare lucem.'

The Bengal Government, there is reason to believe from the stoppage of further outlay, have exerted their power; Mr. Fullerton intends to remain at Malacca, and all may yet be retrieved.

If allowed to grow by itself, Singapore must thrive, and will exceed the most sanguine expectations by its prosperity. Neither customs nor any additional weight can safely be added to its legitimate burden, or that which it has borne since its infancy.

TO CAPTAIN WILLIAM MAXFIELD.

Sir,

London, April 14th, 1828.

The prominent part you have acted for some time past at the East India House, the zeal, activity, and independence you have exhibited, claim my admiration, and must plead my apology for addressing you personally on this occasion; and if, in so doing, I shall prove at all instrumental in preserving your consistency, I shall contribute no less to preserve your credit, than to benefit the public.

The motives by which I am actuated, are very remote from hostility or opposition. I have long approved and applauded that line of conduct which had evidently the public good in view, without the shadow of personal gratification; and the sacrifice of your individual interests was no less praiseworthy than creditable.

It has been long known to many, that you were engaged in the preparation of a work, descriptive of the East India Company's service, trade, &c. &c., and, Sir, from my knowledge of your zeal, application, and general information, with a belief that you have long contemplated such subject, with reference to the continuation of the present charter, I have no hesitation in saying, that I anticipate much public benefit from the facts, evidence, and data, which I believe it in your power to adduce at so important a crisis.

Report, however, says that your opinions, on many important points, connected with Indian affairs, have undergone considerable change, and that you now even consider the preservation of our Indian Empire dependent on the preservation of the East India Company. Mere report, however, would have had little weight with me, unless corroborated by some circumstances, which I confess have excited my surprise. Had you not been present at the last two Quarterly General Courts held at the India House, I should have found an excuse for you, which I am at present unable to conceive.

When no positive evidence can be had, we must avail ourselves of such as presents itself; and the opinions of some men may be ascertained by their silence on certain occasions, as unequivocally as it distinctly averred. The defalcation which had occurred in the Honourable Company's treasury, the importance of the subject, and the interest it excited among a large body of the Proprietors, rendered such affair no less worthy of notice, than likely to attract your attention. You have given too many proofs of your fearless independence to allow me to attribute your studied silence, on a question of such interest, to dread; and ignorance only could be an

adequate plea for abandoning a task, which justice and the public interests urged you to undertake.

The Company's treasury then, Sir, may be notoriously plundered, and the delinquents not merely pardoned but promoted, while a perfect oblivion is produced, and you are studiously silent on the subject. Mr. Gahagan, I think, did advert to the circumstance, at the last Quarterly Court, but declared his want of knowledge of the facts to enable him to submit a motion on the subject, while he dwelt on the importance of it. If you could have stated your inability, for want of information, to frame a motion on such an important point, I should have been spared the trouble of addressing you on this occasion; but, if I am not grossly mis-informed, you were, long ago, in possession of all the particulars of the transaction alluded to, as well as the extraordinary conduct of the Court of Directors in such affair. With such information, what a case ought you not to have established,—what credit might you not have obtained,—and what an opportunity you have lost?

You must be aware how many there are who admire and approve, both in the Court of Proprietors and out of it, the conduct of those who dare to question the proceedings of the Court of Directors; and, although few are the hands which are raised to support the minority, there are many who reciprocate in their feelings and opinions, though they are not at liberty to avow them.

Your silence, coupled with a knowledge of the transaction, evinces a degree of indulgence and consideration on your part, which I had little expected; and, under such circumstances, I shall be as little surprised to find you soon the strenuous advocate of those you have so frequently assailed. If you are a sincere convert to the opinion, that the happiness and prosperity of India are best secured through the administration of the East India Company, I am well aware no argument of mine can have any influence; but, if it is the mere portion of those advantages, which the extensive patronage of the Court of Directors hold out as the reward of their faithful adherents and defenders, which operates to turn you, let me entreat you to hesitate ere you adopt a course so delusive and discreditable. Remember you have too long, too stedfastly, and too effectually exposed the defects and mis-management of various branches of the Company's service, to be readily forgiven; while the hungry dependents, and thick-and-thin supporters of every abuse, claim the lasting gratitude and sole rewards of the Court of Directors.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

AN OLD PROPRIETOR.



PERPUSTAKAAN NASIONAL REPUBLIK INDONESIA