

**An Anecdotal History  
Of Old Times . . .  
In Singapore . . .**

**(With Portraits and Illustrations)**

FROM

The Foundation of the Settlement under the Honourable the  
East India Company, on February 6th, 1819,

TO THE

Transfer to the Colonial Office as part of the Colonial  
Possessions of the Crown on April 1st, 1867,

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES—VOLUME I.

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from India. The previous Census published had been for 1836, when the total inhabitants amounted to 29,984, exclusive of the floating population, military force and convicts: and as without these, the new Census numbered only 33,969, the increase in the fixed population during the four years that had elapsed since the former was taken, amounted to little above 4,000, of which fully three-fourths were Chinese, but it was believed the Census was rather under than above the mark. There were in the interior of the island 477 gambier and pepper plantations, while in 1836 there were only 250. There were in use on the island, during the year, 170 four-wheeled and 44 two-wheeled carriages: 266 ponies, and 77 carts. The total amount of taxation paid to Government, which consisted solely of the Farms and the Assessment, amounted to \$106,125. and the total rental of the island, estimated according to the rate levied as assessment, amounted to \$136,129, of which \$7,600 was the proportion of what was termed the country.

Dr. Robert Little, M.D. (*Edin.*), arrived in Singapore on the 11th August in this year in the vessel *Gulnare*. He lived at first in the Dispensary in the Square, and Dr. M. J. Martin lived in the adjoining building which still forms part of John Little & Co.'s premises. From 1843 to 1846 Dr. Martin lived at Annanbank in River Valley Road, and Dr. Little, his partner, afterwards lived at Bonnygrass House, and did so for nearly forty years. It was originally built by Mr. Adam Sykes, of Robert Wise & Co., who lived close by with his wife. In 1846 Dr. Little was one of those who took steps to form a Presbyterian Congregation here. In 1848 he wrote a long paper in the second volume of Logan's Journal on the use of opium in Singapore: and in the same volume and in the fourth, his long papers on fever being caused by coral reefs, which led to much animated discussion; and in the third volume he wrote a treatise on the diseases of the nutmeg tree in Singapore. In October, 1848, the *Free Press* said:—"On Friday last a special Court was held by the lay Judges, for the purpose of swearing in Mr. R. Little, Surgeon, as Coroner. The appointment of Mr. Little to the office cannot be looked upon but as a very judicious one, and it is to be hoped that the Government will, in their appointments generally, seek to carry out the principle which seems to have guided them in this instance, namely, to nominate those possessing the best qualification for office, instead of allowing other considerations, not connected with fitness for the required duties, to have a paramount influence."

In June, 1855, Dr. Little issued a circular and advertisement asking the European community to meet at the News Rooms at 2.15 on the 30th June, to take the necessary steps to establish a sanitarium on Gunong Pulai, but nothing came of it, and it has been proposed several times since with the same result.

It is the highest land within thirty miles of Singapore, and Dr. Little coveted the top, and wanted the East India Company to make a road to it. In those days the Bengal Civilians thought Singapore to be the very place to come to for health, and the Doctor pictured to himself villas, hotels, billiard tables, and soda water manufactories on the very top of his elysium, with mail-coaches to arrive there. A

party of six was got up, of which J. T. Thomson, the surveyor, was one, and he has left us an amusing account of it. They went up the river Skudai as far as possible in a boat and then walked all day through the jungle, sighting a tiger on the hill, and just at dusk reached a small hut made by the convicts who had gone on ahead. After a meal of hot rice and jam (and whisky) they sang to a violin which an Irishman had brought with him. They did not sleep much, and in the morning they toiled up to the summit, only to find that they had gone to the wrong place and the highest point was on another much higher hill, and there was a great gulf fixed between. On arriving at the summit they had a clear view of the coast of Sumatra and of Bukit Timah. The thermometer was only five degrees below that on the plain, and their provisions were run out, so they all came down again.

Near the foot of the hill a large animal was heard close to them, and ten minutes afterwards, in winding round the ravine, at the bottom of which was a clear flowing rivulet, Mr. Robert McEwen (of W. R. Paterson & Co., afterwards of McEwen & Co., and then of the Borneo Co.), espied a large animal and near it another of a similar kind. Immediately the gun was cocked, every breath hushed, bang went the piece, and a roar was heard. Another ball followed, and the animal tried to mount the hill, but another brace of balls from the same hand turned him, and he made for the other side; by this time one of the convicts came up, but his gun was not loaded, which, however, was soon done, and, with a Malay servant who had seized a Chinaman's *parang*, followed the animal. The convict hit him again, still he rushed, crushing all before him, but his fore leg being broken by the first shot, he made but little progress; at last, he stood near a tree, and the Malay boy with his *parang* only, rushing on him to have the first stroke, he turned round and charged him, the boy jumped behind the tree, and in an agony of pain the mighty beast, blind from his fury, struck his horn against the trunk, snapped the end off, and receiving a ball from the convict, who had again loaded, he fell.

Having cut off his ear, the Malay boy rushed through the wood, and having found the party, who were trying to find him, he proclaimed with a shout of exultation that it was a rhinoceros. It was the female, the male having escaped, and it may be worthy of note that the bullets were made of tin and lead, and fired from a smooth bore. As soon as the *parang* could do it, she was decapitated, then shorn of her feet and ears, and lastly of her tail. The interior was examined, and the contents of the stomach found to consist of partially digested grass and leaves; the examination, however, was but a brief one from fear that the male would return, and there being only two balls remaining; nor was this fear an ideal one, as he made his appearance next day to the Chinamen who went to skin the body, and routed them out. Loaded with the skull, which was carried by the convicts, they made the best of their way to the Punguloo's house, which they reached in three hours, so that they had come from the top of the hill in four and a half hours, excluding stoppages, having taken a whole day to find their way up. At 2 p.m., they got into their boat, twenty souls and luggage to boot, and rowed down the river,

much assisted by a rapid current which, however, owing to the tortuous nature of the stream, and the sunken and projecting trees, endangered their safety frequently, for had it not been for the strength of the boat, the alertness of the steersman, and the dexterity of the gun-boat men, six or seven times they would have been upset. Two of the party, Mr. Thomson and Dr. Little, had arranged to ride across the island from Kranji by the road then just newly finished (1855). Their horses were expected to be at the first gambier *bangsal*, to which they found their way in the dark through thick, high scrub. The Chinese had lately been attacked by some Malays, and had just built a stockade round their house, and thinking the two travellers were Malays, they came out, in a fright, with spears and swords, and the Doctor (who Mr. Thomson says was a brave man) got nearly stuck with a spear. Then the Chinese saw his white dress and recognised him as an *orang puteh*, and welcomed them with great joy. They got into town by early morning and thus ended Doctor Little's inroad upon the jungle of the Malay Peninsula, and the first ride across the island by Bukit Timah Road. The excursion had taken four days; the head of the rhinoceros was to be seen for many years at the Borneo Co.'s offices at the corner of Malacca Street.

Dr. Little was one of the first unofficial members of the Legislative Council in 1867, and did a great deal of public work in Singapore. Until 1847 he was a partner with Dr. M. J. Martin, as Martin and Little, Surgeons, in the Square. In 1847 Dr. Martin left Singapore and Dr. Little continued the practice alone. In 1859 he was joined by Dr. Robertson, and it was called Little and Robertson. Dr. Little died at Blackheath, London, on 11th June, 1888.

Dr. Little was the eldest of three brothers who all spent the greater part of their lives in Singapore. Their grandfather was the minister of the village of Applegarth in Scotland, as his fathers had been for some generations before him. Their father was a lawyer in Edinburgh.

The second son, John Martin Little, and his younger brother, Matthew Little, eventually were the partners in John Little and Co., which arose out of the establishment of their cousin or uncle, Mr. Francis S. Martin, as a store-keeper and auctioneer in 1842. On 30th August, 1845, he made over his business to Mr. John Martin Little and Mr. Cursetjee Frommurzee, who carried it on as Little, Cursetjee & Co., on the same premises as those occupied by Mr. Martin, where John Little & Co., Limited, still are. Cursetjee was the son of Frommurzee Sorabjee, a Parsee merchant who established his firm in Singapore in 1840, and died on the 17th February, 1849. Cursetjee afterwards did business on his own account, and was very popular in Singapore. He had an English wife. He died here in 1881. On 1st July, 1853, the partnership of Little and Cursetjee was dissolved, and Mr. J. M. Little was joined as a partner by Mr. Matthew Little, and the business was continued under the name of John Little & Co. In July, 1900, it was converted into a limited company, solely for the convenience of the transmission of interests in the business, but retained in the same hands. Mr. J. M. Little died at Blackheath in 1894. Mr. M. Little left Singapore in 1877 to reside permanently at