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MALACCA.

On the Malacca shore the land is likewise rather low, but broken here and there by some small hills and undulations, and the white sand beach, now and then interrupted by a small rocky cliff, or here and there by the jungly entrance of a little river. The whole country seems covered with wood, among which groves of cocoa-nuts and other palms wave their feathered heads, like the ornamental plumes of the forest. At some miles' distance in the interior, may now and then be discerned, through the hot and trembling haze of the tropical sky, the dim outline of some bold granitic hills. One of these, called Mount Ophir, at the back of Malacca, rises to a height of about 3,600 feet. If we took boat and entered the little rivulet, and landed at the town of Malacca, we should find a most pleasant and picturesque old town, with some remains of the architecture of its former Portuguese masters, and still more quaint old buildings, characteristic of the Dutch, from whom it came into our possession. Chinese houses, ornamented with all the grotesqueness for which that nation is famous; Chinese temples, with huge gilt images, and cool courts, under groves of beautiful trees; and the more fragile houses of the Malay people, that look as if made merely out of the refuse wood and sticks of the bamboos, bananas, and palm-trees in which they are

secluded;—all these, with open, grassy spaces, bordered by noble tamarind trees, and cool, sheltered lanes and alleys, under avenues of cocoa-nuts and bamboos, form a most agreeable contrast to the glaring, dusty streets, bare spaces, and spick and span new English houses we should afterwards meet with at Singapore. Malacca is, no doubt, rather a lazy place; there is not much business doing; nobody seems to be in a hurry, neither does anyone seem at all anxious for hard work. But there is a delightful, dreamy sort of air about it, everyone appearing quite happy and contented, which, to our feelings, made it a most enjoyable place for a short residence. There is, moreover, no spot in the world—and for this assertion we can quote the authority of the resident—where there is so little crime of any sort. The criminal courts have really nothing to do, and the civil almost as little. Any man, by two or three days' moderate exertion, can earn enough to support him in ease, and supply him with amusement for the rest of the week; and, accordingly, having food, shelter, and amusement, and occasionally a little finery, they are therewith content. We dwell rather on Malacca, as on the entrance to the great Malay archipelago, because it always appeared to us that its inhabitants afforded a good type of what all the Malayo-Polynesian races would become, whenever they had been for a sufficient time under a good government—a government that would keep order and administer equal justice, without being over strict in exacting either money, labour, or religious observances, from the population.* Let us, however, proceed a little, and visit Singapore. On approaching it the Straits of Malacca seem to be completely closed by low land on every side, a number of islands lying across it; the passages between which, as well as great part of the adjacent seas, are so encumbered with shoals, that the unwary captain who happens to touch on one of them about high water, will probably, in a short time, be able to walk round his ship and examine the state of her bottom, and may consider himself a lucky man if that be all the harm that happens to him. Arrived off the town of Singapore, we still seem to be in a lake surrounded by rather low land on every side, that on the south being cut up by a multitude of channels, not yet known or surveyed, although all inhabited, and sometimes, to our shame be it spoken, by people whose trade is a sort of pettifogging piracy. They emerge in small prahus from their retreats, and pounce on any native boats, sampans, or prahus they may be able to master, robbing and, perhaps, murdering our customers, and sometimes our own subjects, within sight of our own doors, and of the vessels lying at anchor in our harbours.—*Article: The Indian Archipelago.*

* There is a considerable Malay College in Malacca, which has made it of late years the centre of Malayan literature and instruction.