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MALACCA AND THE MALAYS.

Malacca has about 30,000 inhabitants—a mixture of Portuguese, Dutch, English, Malays, and Chinese. Of the three European races, the Portuguese are the most numerous. They are chiefly descendants of the old conquerors. Their forefathers were the followers and brothers-in-arms of Vasco de Gama and Albuquerque. They are now an ugly and degraded race, inferior to the pure Malays, with whom they have long since allied themselves. In company with a missionary, Dr. Yvan went to visit a hamlet far in the jungle, in the direction of Mount Ophir, inhabited by these half-breeds. After five hours' ride through rice-fields, jungle, and vast tracts covered with palms, they reached the foot of the little rising ground upon which the village stood. No trace of cultivation, no cheerful sounds, not even a wreath of smoke, announced its proximity. The paths leading to it resembled the tracts of wild beasts rather than roads used by men. The so-called village was a collection of ruinous huts, around which the women were squatted, chewing betel and nursing sickly infants. Most of the men were absent: those who remained were stretched at length upon the ground, smoking large maize-leaf sigarittos. They were all of small stature and puny frame, and naked, or nearly so. Their language was a mixture of Portuguese and Malay. The missionary dismounted and questioned them. They displayed an utter lack of intelligence, knew nothing of their origin, and had no names except those derived (as amongst the North American Indians) from particular qualities or defects. Thus, one was called the One-eyed, another the Strong, and so on. They knew not what marriage or baptism meant, and they had no account of time. These were the descendants of the victorious Portuguese. In the course of a very short time—perhaps of little more than a century—they had lost or forgotten everything—religion, morality, language; even tradition, often the consolation of degenerate races. It was frightful to behold the children of civilised and Christian men thus reduced lower than the untaught savage. The Portuguese of the city, if not equally degraded, were in miserable plight enough. As the doctor and the missionary rode into Malacca, the latter was accosted by a young man, whose garb and features betrayed his origin, and who drew him aside and spoke to him in a low voice. The priest, without replying, furtively slipped his hand into his pocket, and held it out to his interlocutor, as in sign of friendship. Rapidly and adroitly as this was done, Dr. Yvan comprehended that the stout healthy young man had received an alms, and he asked his companion if he could not work instead of thus humiliating himself. "He could, certainly," was the reply; "but his dignity would not allow him. He is a gentleman of the place. His parents were formerly merchants, but have not a dollar of their fortune left. And so little is required to live in this country, that it is quite as easy to beg as to work. With the exception of a few families, all the Portuguese live from hand to mouth, without certain resource for the morrow." The Dutch, less numerous than the Portuguese, have not allowed themselves to sink so low. Most of them are traders, and purchase the produce of the country from Malay agriculturists. At the house of one of them Dr. Yvan saw a diamond from Mount Ophir, as large as a very large filbert. This stone appeared to have been rolled in the bed of a torrent; the surface was worn, like ground glass, and it was difficult to recognise a precious gem in this pebble of a milky white. The owner had purchased it, for a very small sum, of a Malay from the interior of the country, and he had great expectations of profit from its sale. I confess, that the more I examined this rough diamond, the less I was inclined to credit the fabulous value set upon it; and when the worthy Dutchman calculated, in my presence, the gain he was to derive from his treasure, he reminded me of an alchemist and his crucible.—Article: *Six Months with the Malays.*