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1809.

ACCOUNT OF BOOKS.

A short Account of PRINCE OF WALES'S ISLAND, in the Straits of Malacca, by Sir GEORGE LEITH, Bart. Major of the 17th Foot, and late Lieutenant-Governor. 4to. Booth, London.

THE supreme government of Bengal judging it necessary to establish a commercial post in the Straits of Malacca, considered Acheen as a proper place for that purpose; but, after a fruitless negotiation with the king, the business was relinquished. Mr. Light mentioned Pulo Penang, an island belonging to the king of Quedah, as a place well suited, in every respect, to their views. It was obtained, in perpetuity, from the king, on condition of paying six thousand dollars a year, as an indemnification for the loss he might sustain, in his revenue, from the trade of Quedah being diverted into another channel.

Mr. Light was appointed governor, for which he was well qualified, and sailed from Bengal with a small detachment, in July 1806, and arrived at Pulo Penang early in August: he hoisted the British flag on the 12th of that month, and called it "PRINCE OF WALES'S ISLAND."

The first settlers had to contend with great difficulties: An immense forest was to be cut down; swamps drained, and large ravines filled up. The zealous perseverance of Mr. Light, and those under his command, overcame these obstacles, in a much shorter time than could have been expected. A town was marked out, called George-town: population increased, and with it trade. Within the first year, upwards of sixty Chinese families removed from the adjoining countries, and settled in the town and country.

The population and commerce of the new settlement met with nothing to interrupt its growing prosperity till the year 1791, when the king of Quedah, jealous of the growing consequence of the colony, demanded an increase of four thousand dollars, to compensate him for the loss he suffered, in consequence of the prows resorting to the port of George-town, instead of Quedah, as formerly. Mr. Light, not deeming himself authorized to comply with this demand, the king assembled a large force under different pretences; but the real one was to seize on the Island. Mr. Light applied for reinforcements to Bengal, which arrived at the most critical moment; when the Quedah forces were assembled on the opposite shore, at the town of Puya, and formed a fort. With this reinforcement, it was deemed advisable not to wait the attack of the Malays, but to drive them away from the fort, and to attack the prows in Puya river. The fort was taken by assault, and most of the prows destroyed.

In consequence of these successes there was a treaty, by which it was stipulated, that the king of Quedah should receive six thousand dollars per annum: Mr. Light promising, at the same time, to recommend to the supreme government to grant the four thousand dollars previously applied for. This being acceded to by the supreme government, it has, from that period, been regularly paid.

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The principal articles of the treaty provided for the importation of provisions into the island; the mutual delivery of all slaves, debtors, and murderers; and the exclusion of all other European nations from settling in any part of Quedah.

In 1792, it was proposed to withdraw the settlement from Prince of Wales's Island to the Andamans; but, after two years trial at the latter place, the climate and situation not proving so favourable as was expected, the artificers and convicts were sent to Prince of Wales's Island.

On the 21st of October, 1794, Mr. Light died, and was succeeded by the first civil assistant, Mr. Mannington; this gentleman, on account of ill health, was obliged to resign, and proceed to Bengal, where he died.

Major Mackdonald was appointed his successor, and took charge in April, 1796, at a moment when the island was threatened with total destruction, by six large French frigates, fitted out at the Mauritius, for the express purpose of plundering and destroying the settlement. These frigates fell in with his majesty's ships the *Victorious* and *Arrogant*, by whom they were so roughly treated, as to be obliged to bear up for Batavia, and relinquish all thoughts of their intended enterprise.

The increasing prosperity of the Island was decidedly proved, in the year 1797, when the Bengal and Madras portion of the expedition, against the Manillas, rendezvoused here for a month, to the number of upwards of five thousand Europeans, beside a considerable body of Native troops, who were abundantly, and daily, supplied with fresh meat and vegetables. Much was certainly due to the

activity, intelligence; and prudent arrangement of major Macdonald. — This gentleman died at Madras, in May 1799, after a few days illness, much and sincerely regretted.

In February, 1800, Sir George Leith, Bart. was nominated lieutenant-governor of this island, and its dependencies; and, on the 20th of April following, arrived there and took charge of the government.

This island is situated in the straits of Malacca, the N. E. point $8^{\circ} 25'$ N. L. $100^{\circ} 19'$ E. L. It is separated from the Quedah shore, on the Malay Peninsula, by a narrow strait; and is so happily placed, and so well defended by the countries which surround it, that a gale of wind has never been felt there. Sumatra is to the southward and westward; the large mountainous islands, called the Laddas, and the high land of Quedah, to the northward; the mountains, which run through the Malay Peninsula, effectually protect it on the east. Violent squalls are occasionally experienced; but they rarely continue for more than an hour. The climate is unquestionably the finest in India; the seasons are not marked with such precision as in other parts of Asia (indeed no one year can be said to resemble another); but this very irregularity probably contributes much to the pleasantness of the climate. With the exception of January and February, which are the dry, hot months, the island is rarely, few days together, without rain, which produces a constant verdure; and these frequent showers cool the air, and moderate the heat, which would otherwise be intense. The heaviest rains fall about November
and

and December, when they frequently continue twenty-four hours without intermission. Dry seasons rarely occur; but instances have been known, when no rain has fallen for near five months. Although the days are frequently very hot, the nights are generally very cool and pleasant; as there are not more than ten nights in the year which can be considered as oppressive; a comfort not experienced in any other part of India. The flag-staff hill, nearly the highest on the island, is estimated to rise 2500 feet above the level of the sea. The thermometer never rises above 78° . seldom more than 74° , and falls to 66° , while, on the plain, it ranges from 76° to 90° . The best time for a residence on the hill is during the dry season, when the plains are parched, dusty, and disagreeable; at this period, especially when the air on the hill is clear, keen, and free from damp and fog, which, at other seasons, occasionally render a residence on the hill unpleasant. The distance from the town to the foot of the hills is five miles; from thence to the flag-staff three more. On the flag-staff hill there is a bungalow, for the lieutenant-governor, and another on a hill close to it, for the accommodation of convalescents. The view from the flag-staff hill is uncommonly grand and extensive; the Laddas to the N. W. and Pulo Dinding to the southward, each 70 miles distant, are perfectly visible in clear weather. In April, 1790, and in August, 1802, there were two shocks of an earthquake felt, but no damage was done by either.

The island is an irregular, four-sided figure, computed to contain

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nearly 160 square miles; the north side being longest, and the south the shortest. Much of the north, and nearly the whole of the east and south sides, are in a state of cultivation. On the west, there is a considerable bay, but too much exposed during the whole of the S. W. monsoon, to render it convenient for ships to lay there. Through the centre of the island, from N. to S. is a range of lofty hills, which decrease in magnitude as they approach the southward. On the east side, the country is, in general, low, as it is on the north, but rises gradually as you advance into the interior. The utmost extent of what may be considered level ground, from the sea to the mountains, is about four miles in a direct line; this is to be understood of what is already cleared. The great western bay will, when cleared, certainly yield as great, if not a greater, extent of level ground; great advantages will arise to the settlement, in general, from this extensive tract being brought into cultivation, which nothing has hitherto prevented, but the real danger attending the undertaking, from the pirates that infest the bay. The soil is various, generally light, black mould, mixed with gravel, clay, and, in many parts, sandy. The whole island was, for ages, covered with an immense forest; there was every where a fine vegetable mould, formed by the decayed leaves, which, as the woods were cleared, and the surface exposed to the weather, in a considerable degree disappeared, particularly upon the point, which is now entirely sand. Forming a garden here is attended with much labour, as the manure soon sinks through. A fine soft grass fortunately

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nately grows, which relieves the eye, that would otherwise suffer from the strong light of the sun; this soil is confined to the point, for, as you advance into the country, it becomes fit for every kind of cultivation. Excellent water is procured by sinking wells on the point.

GEORGE TOWN is extensive, bounded on the north, and the east, by the sea; on the south by an inlet of the sea, improperly called Prangui river, and on the west, by the high road. The streets are spacious, and cross each other at right angles. Sir George Leith, immediately after his arrival, applied himself to remove some stagnant pools, that were in the principal streets, which he had properly raised and drained; and an offensive mud bank, which extended the whole length of Beach Street, he had divided into small lots, and sold, by the committee appointed to superintend the making of streets, upon condition of the purchaser enclosing their respective portions by a stone wall, filling up the interval, and building houses thereon.

The public roads are wide, and extend many miles round the town; those immediately in its vicinity are planted with trees. There are several good bridges over the rivers, which were built by the company's artificers, and the Bengal convicts: the latter are employed in making bricks, under the inspection of an European brickmaker. The markets are well supplied with fish of various kinds, and of excellent quality; poultry of all kinds; pork; grain of every description; and a great variety of fine vegetables and fruits. Beef and veal are not of good

quality; sheep are imported from Bengal and the coast. Goat mutton can be procured from the Malay Peninsula, and Sumatra: When of a proper age the meat is very good: Milk, butter, and bread are very dear, the two former not in great plenty.

On the north-east angle stands the fort, in which are barracks for the European artillery, the arsenal, magazine, and military storehouses, on a small and inadequate scale: The fort is ill built; and incapable of defence from its size and construction. The sea, for some time past, has been making alarming encroachments on the north face of the fort, and along the Esplanade, for upwards of a mile in that direction; some mode of preventing this devastation is become indispensably necessary, to prevent the town from being in time washed away. The harbour is formed by the narrow strait which divides the north side of the island from the Quedah shore; is capacious, and, every where affords good anchorage for the largest ships. At first view the harbour appears much exposed to the north-west, where it is entirely open to the sea, which would certainly roll in with great violence, were it not prevented by an extensive flat at the entrance of the harbour; this flat extends from Quedah shore to the island, and is nearly two miles in breadth, upon which there is four fathoms at low water spring tides; thus the harbour may be considered a spacious bason, capable of containing the largest fleets with perfect ease and safety; the principal entrance is from the north-west. There is also a very fine channel to the southward, with sufficient water for a 74 gun ship, and through

through which many of the largest China ships have sailed. This channel, which was first discovered by Sir Homê Popham, is of the greatest importance to the trade of the island. To the above advantages is to be added the very important one of its easy access at all seasons of the year: the excellence of the inner harbour and the passage from Prince of Wales's Island to Bengal, being certain at all seasons of the year, gives it a decided superiority, as a naval port, over Bombay.

Pulo Jerajah is above five miles from the point, is three long, and extends nearly to the south end of the island. It is hilly, covered with fine timber, and abounding with small streams of excellent water. There are several spots well adapted for erecting the buildings required for a marine arsenal. Careening wharfs can

be constructed with the utmost facility, there being five fathom water close to the rocks, and is capable of being defended against any force. Its situation is well adapted for a naval hospital, being high, open, and healthy.

The island produces timber, fit for every purpose of ship building, and possesses one very important advantage over every other place, in India, in our possession, being able to furnish masts of any dimensions. Lower masts of one piece have been provided for 74 Gun ships. On Pulo Dunding, seventy miles to the southward, crooked timber, of any size, can be procured.

The following is a list of the names and qualities of some of the different sorts of timber found on Prince of Wales's Island, viz. —

- Madong, 1st sort.—Planks and beams for ships and houses, durable.
 Ditto, 2nd do.—Ditto, ditto, ditto.
 Ditto, 3rd do.—Planks for sheathing ships, and floors for houses.
 Penagra, 1st sort.—For ship's frames, and blocks of different sizes, crooked, durable.
 Ditto, 2nd do.—Ditto, ditto, crooked.
 Poone, red.—Yards and topmasts, great length.
 Ditto, gray.—Ditto, ditto, ditto.
 Mangrove, red.—Posts for houses, beams thirty to fifty feet long, very durable.
 Ditto, white.—Not so durable as the red.
 Dammerlaut, 1st sort.—Keels for ships, and beams for houses, great length and size, very durable.
 Ditto, 2nd do.—Ditto, ditto, ditto.
 Bintang Ore.—The best wood for masts, of which his Majesty's ship Suffolk's lower masts were made, each of one stick.
 Red Wood.—Proper for furniture.
 Murboon.—The best wood, to the Eastward, for ships and houses.
 Cayoo Bato, or Stone Wood.—Beams for houses, durable.
 Chingal, white.—Beams for ships.
 Lampoon, ditto.—Lathing for houses.
 Ditto, yellow.—Flooring for ditto.

Prince of Wales's Island is abundantly supplied with numerous streams of fine water flowing from the hills in every direction. Three or four of these streams, after traversing a great space,

unite, and form the Penang river, which is the most considerable in the island, and discharges itself into the sea, about a mile to the southward of the town. All ships are supplied with water from this

river, which must be carefully filled at half flood, otherwise it will be brackish.

From the appearance of many places in the interior of the island, and the number of tombs which were discovered soon after the settlement was formed, the tradition of its being formerly inhabited seems entitled to credit. There is not, probably, any part of the world, at this day, where, in so small a space, so many different people are assembled together, or so great a variety of languages spoken; amongst them are British, Dutch, Portuguese, Armenians, Arabs, Parsees, Chinese, Chooliahs, Malays, Bugusses, Burmahs, Jawanese, &c. &c.

The *Chinese* form one of the most numerous and useful classes of the inhabitants; they may be estimated to amount to between five and six thousand. The better sort of them possess valuable estates in land and houses, and were the first planters of pepper. The lower orders exercise the different trades of carpenters, smiths, shoe-makers, &c. &c. they are labourers and fishermen, and supply the markets with vegetables. They are good workmen, and receive high wages; the greatest part of which, as they are expensive in their mode of living, is spent on the island.—Every Chinaman makes it an invariable rule to send a certain portion of his earnings, annually, to his friends and relations in China. These people are addicted to gaming, and smoking opium, and immoderately fond of seeing plays acted, after the manner of their own country; though the audiences, on these occasions, are extremely numerous, the utmost or-

der, silence, and regularity is observed. During their holidays which continue a month, no consideration will induce a Chinaman to work: in this period the savings of a year are frequently dissipated in a few hours. They are, in general, a quiet, industrious people, and have proved a most valuable acquisition to the settlement; indeed, without them, it would have little, or no cultivation.

The *Chooliahs* come from the coast of Coromandel; many of them are merchants, and are fixed inhabitants, and possess property to a very great amount; the greatest portion, however, of the Chooliahs reside on the island only for a few months, when, having disposed of their goods, and purchased a fresh cargo, they return to the coast.

The *Coolies* and *Boatmen* are Chooliahs; those two descriptions of people remain one, two, or three years, according to circumstances, and then return to the coast. The Choolies are dispersed all over the Malay Peninsula, and are entrusted by the different rajahs with the chief management of their affairs; they are a quiet, useful people.

The proportion of Malay inhabitants is, fortunately, very small; they are an indolent, vindictive, and treacherous people, and, generally speaking, seem fit for little else but cutting down trees, at which they are very expert.—They are incapable of any labour beyond the cultivation of paddy. When they procure a small quantity of rice and opium, no inducement, as long as those articles last, is sufficiently powerful to make them do any work.—But though so rude and uncivilized a race, some of them are most excellent gold-

goldsmiths, and work, in fillagre, in a very beautiful manner indeed.

The *Bugguses* come from Borneo and the Celebes. Though commonly considered as Malays, their language is perfectly distinct, and, indeed, in every particular, they are a very different people; they are bold, independent, and enterprising; make good soldiers; and, if treated with kindness, are attached and faithful. They have a small town on the Penang river; their numbers have lately increased; many of their prows come here annually, and exchange their gold dust and clothes, for iron, opium, &c. &c. &c.

The *Burmahs* are not numerous, they live in a small town by themselves, and subsist chiefly by fishing.

The *Parsees* come from Bombay and Surat; some of the higher sort are merchants, the lower order are chiefly shipwrights, and are esteemed excellent workmen. They are remarkably quiet, well-behaved people; it is much to be wished that their numbers were augmented, which will certainly be the case if the shipping of this port increases.

In the year 1797, an account was taken of the inhabitants then resident on the island, exclusive of Europeans and the garrison, when the number was found to be six thousand nine hundred and thirty-seven. In the year 1801-2, the lieutenant-governor ordered another account to be taken, by which it appeared there were seven hundred and twenty-three persons who possessed landed property, and whose wives, children, relations, friends, servants, and

slaves, amounted to nine thousand five hundred and eighty-seven; of which number one thousand two hundred and twenty-two, only, were slaves;—the total amounts to ten thousand three hundred and ten. But this enumeration of the inhabitants, though made with every degree of care and attention, cannot, on account of the difficulties opposed to such an operation, by the peculiar habits of the people, be considered as sufficiently accurate. It being certain, however, that the error does not lie in having overrated the inhabitants, we may safely venture to estimate the population of the island at twelve thousand, every person included; a larger population than has, perhaps, been known in any settlement, in so short a period, from its foundation.

Prince of Wales's Island produces every thing which is common to the neighbouring countries, and many things which are only found at a great distance; among the former are pepper, beetle-nut, beetle-leaf, cocoa-nut, coffee, sugar, cotton, paddy, ginger, yams, sweet-potatoes; a great variety of vegetables; and many different sorts of fruits; as the mangoteen, rambosteen, pine-apple, guava, orange, citron, pomegranate, &c. &c. The exotics are cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, pimento, kyapotee, colalava, and a number of other plants, from the Molaccas and Eastern Isles, which have been introduced within these few years, and thrive in the most luxuriant manner. The gamootee, of which the black coir rope is made, is a native of the island.

By an account of the cultivation of

of the island, taken in 1801, it appears there were

Pepper vines under three years old.....	733,349
Pepper vines from three to six years and upwards.....	583,230
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	1,316,579
	<hr/>
Beetle-nut trees.....	342,110
Cocoa-nut ditto.....	32,306

There are tin mines in the Island; but they have never been worked, as this article can always be procured cheaper from the different countries in the vicinity of the Island, than it could be obtained were the mines worked at the expense and risk of government. A small quantity of the ore has been analyzed, and found to be of an excellent quality.

The author formed a treaty with the King of Quedah, in June, 1800, for ceding to the hon. the East India company in perpetuity a tract of land, on the opposite coast to George Town, extending about eighteen miles along the coast by three in breadth; also the cession of the island in perpetuity; and the exclusion of all European powers as settlers in the Quedah dominions, at an annual payment of ten thousand Spanish dollars.

Since the publication of this work, an efficient code of civil and criminal laws has been established in the island; which renders it unnecessary to follow the author, in his judicious remarks, on the serious evils arising from the want of such an establishment. We shall proceed to give the author's view of the commerce of the island.

The principal, if not the only

view in forming the settlement, appears to have been the acquiring a port in the straits of Malacca, for commercial purposes; and there certainly is not in any part of India, a place so well adapted to this end as *Prince of Wales's Island*; at the same time it enjoys great advantages as a naval port. Hitherto the productions of the island have constituted but a small portion of the extensive commerce which flourished here for many years; but although this portion has, as yet, been inconsiderable, there is the most satisfactory and pleasing evidence that it is daily increasing. The numerous, extensive, and highly-cultivated plantations of pepper, and beetle nut, which are every where rising into view, will, in a short time, afford large cargoes of those articles, without the trouble and expense of importation. It is computed, that there will be upwards of fifteen thousand piculs of pepper produced on the island this year (1804;) and that in the course of three or four years more, the plantations will yield more than twenty thousand piculs. Coffee also promises to become a valuable commodity; this berry has been imported from different quarters, and they all thrive very well, and produce fine-flavoured coffee. The sugar cane grows with uncommon luxuriance; but as the price of labour is very high, the expense attending the making of sugar will prevent a very extensive cultivation of the cane. The spice plantations, in which are some thousands of clove and nutmeg trees, are so flourishing, that the island may reasonably hope, in a few years, to be able to furnish a valuable cargo of cloves, nutmegs, and mace; with their essential oils,

oils, and also the so-much-esteemed kyapootee oil.* However the productions of the island may increase in various articles, the principal source of wealth must arise from its being considered as the best and greatest port of exchange in India. Ships and vessels come here from every quarter, and can exchange the commodities they bring, for those which are required as a return cargo. This affords the merchant

the very important advantage of a quick return of his capital.

As there is not a custom house on the island, it is not possible to form an accurate idea of the extent of the general imports and exports. In the year 1801-2, an import duty of two per cent. *ad valorem*, was laid on tin, pepper, and beetle nut; from the return given in by the renter of this duty, it appeared that the following quantities of these articles were imported, viz.

	China Piculs.	Catties.	Amount of the Duty	P.
Pepper.....	29,468	5½	5,251	97
Tin.....	14,136	86	3,982	64½
Beetlenut....	45,819	90½	2,842	16
			13,076	78
			Sp. Ds.	

The following statement will shew, at one view, the different places which supply the trade of this port with the articles of import and export.

IMPORTS.

From Bengal.—Opium, grain, iron, steel, marine stores; piece goods, which consist chiefly of hummums, gurrabs, bafties, cossas, tanjabs, mamoodies, chintzs, kurwahs, taffateat, and bandanas.

Coast of Coromandel.—Salt, tobacco, Punjum cloths, koal-blue cloths, coir rope, and yarns; handkerchiefs, chintzs; and a small quantity of fine goods.

Bombay and Malabar Coast.—Cotton, sait; a few piece goods, red wood, sandal wood, shark fins, fish mote, putchuck, myrrh, Surat piece goods, oil, &c.

W. Coast Sumatra.—Pepper, benjamin, camphire, gold dust.

Acheen and Pedier.—Gold dust, beetle-nut, white and red, cut and

chickney, pepper, rice, and Acheen cloths.

Diamond Point.—Rattaus, sago, brimstone, and gold dust.

East Coast.—Tin, pepper, Java arrack, sugar, oil, rice, tobacco, &c. &c. &c.

Junk Ceylon.—Tin, bird's nests, beache de mer, sepun, and elephants' teeth.

Iringano.—Pepper, and gold worked cloths.

Borneo.—Gold dust, sago, and blackwood.

Moluccas.—Spices.

China.—Tea, sugar, lustrings, velvets, paper, umbrellas, china ware of all kinds; quicksilver, nankeens, tutenague, sweetmeats, pickles, and every article required by the Chinese inhabitants, raw silk, copper ware, china, camphire, china root, allum, &c. &c.

EXPORTS.

Sumatra E. and W. Coast.—All the various piece goods from Bengal,

* A cure for the Rheumatism.

Bengal, the coast, and Bombay, cotton, opium, iron, and tobacco.

Junk Ceylon.---Piece goods, and opium.

Iringano, Java, Bornea, Celebes, and Moluccas.---Iron, steel, opium, Bengal piece goods, blue cloth, Europe coarse, red, blue, and green cloths, and coarse cutlery.

China.---Opium, cotton, rattans, beetle-nut, pepper, birds-nests, sandal wood, shark fins, Sumatra camphire, tin, beache de mer, cutch and sepah.

Bengal coast.---Pepper, tin, beetle-nut, cut and chickney, rattans, camphire, gold dust, &c.

In addition to the quantity of pepper at present annually exported from this port, almost any number of tons could be procured for the London market, should it ever be deemed advisable to send it home on account of the honourable company; and we may safely venture to assert, that the pepper will be of as fine quality as any ever procured; and the pepper produced on the Island is considered cleaner than that of the surrounding countries; and in general, in equal measure, it is heavier. In the year 1802, a thousand tons of 20 cwt. were sent from the island to Europe, without having the slightest effect on the surrounding markets. That, and indeed, a much larger quantity, could easily be procured, without any risk of raising the price, viz. 50*l.* sterl. per ton of 20 cwt.

We shall close our extracts, with the manner of cultivating the pepper vine, the result of personal experience of a cultivator, possessed of large plantations.

The vines are propagated from either slips or cuttings, and planted in rows, at the distance of six or eight feet, varying in this respect

according to the judgment of the cultivator. The supporter of the vine is usually planted at the same time, or very soon after the vine.

There are several sorts of supporters, the deedap and moncooda trees, are, however, generally preferred; the former, which is propagated from cuttings, is esteemed the best, its spreading branches and thick foliage affording more shelter to the vine than the latter; but the uncertainty attending the rearing of it in many soils, causes the moncooda, which is raised from the seed without difficulty, to be more commonly used, particularly since the improvement introduced in training it with three or four perpendicular branches, instead of one, which was the usual mode. This is done by cutting off the leader, when the plant is between four and five months old; this causes it to throw out shoots, three or four of which, only, are suffered to remain, and trained in a perpendicular manner. When the vine is first planted, it is covered with a branch of the tree, called *peach* something like the *nepa*, to protect it against the effects of the sun, until it has taken root, and is fit to be brought to the stick; this happens usually six weeks after planting; when a stick about three inches circumference, and seven or eight feet long, is planted near it, to which it soon (being at first slightly attached to it by a string) creeps up towards the top. In eleven or twelve months the vine generally begins to shew blossoms, at which period it may have attained the height of six feet; it is then fit for turning down; this is done by loosening the vine from the stick, and removing that entirely; the leaves are slipped off the stem, leaving only a small tuft

tuft at the top; a pit is then dug close to the roots, about twenty inches diameter, and nearly the same depth; at the bottom of which the stem of the vine is coiled horizontally, bringing the top or tuft, before mentioned, to the permanent supporter, already planted for that purpose, to which it is fastened by a string; the pit is then filled, covering the stem in that position.

The increasing size of the vine, in a short time after the above operation has been performed, shews that roots are springing abundantly from the stem; the whole skill of the cultivator is now shewn by the manner in which he trains the vine; as this naturally takes a perpendicular direction, his care is to prevent it ascending too rapidly, and which, if not checked, it certainly will do. This was an error the majority of pepper planters fell into at the first settlement of the island, when the cultivation of this valuable plant was not so well understood as at present. The top of the vine, therefore, and a length of some feet below it, is consequently not allowed to adhere to the supporter, but being pendent and inclining to the ground, throws out side shoots, by which it increases in bulk proportionably to its height.

Although the blossoms on the vine, thus turned down, come to maturity, the produce, even of the third year, is trifling; averaging, perhaps, in a large plantation, about one eighth of a catty; from the third to the fourth half a catty; increasing half a catty a year, until it will average 2 or $2\frac{1}{2}$ catties; at which time the vine may be considered to be in full vigour. As there are not many plantations on the island much above ten years old, we

can only judge, from information, how long the vine will continue bearing. From intelligent Chinese who have lived at Iringano, and other places on the eastern side of the Malay peninsula, we learn that it continues in full vigour to the age of fifteen years, and then gradually declines, still however, yielding fruit, if properly attended to, to the age of twenty five or thirty years. This opinion differs very materially from that entertained by the original cultivators on the island, who supposed that the vine would cease bearing at sixteen years; there is, however, every reason to suppose that the mean of the two opinions will prove nearly correct: a garden, eleven years old, situated on Songhy Cluan, containing 3,000 plants only, has lately been let for 3 years, for seventy piculs of pepper per annum, which makes each plant average $2\frac{1}{4}$ catties; a strong argument of the vine's bearing longer than sixteen years; as did it then cease giving fruit entirely, the gradual decrease would certainly have commenced at eleven years: but it has been before observed, that the vine in full vigour will not average more than $2\frac{1}{2}$ catties per plant. The renter of this garden is thought by his countrymen, the Chinese, to have made a very good bargain.

There are few soils on this Island unfavourable to the vine: the dark mould, mixed with gravel, is generally preferred, it thrives in high and low situations; best in the latter, if sufficiently raised to prevent the water, in the heavy rains, from setting about the roots; if they were covered with water six or eight days, the vine would infallibly be killed. A plantation, if properly taken care of, should

be

be kept perfectly free from weeds and grass; and for the first five or six years, the earth should be regularly turned twice a year; after that period once turning will be sufficient. Four Coolies will take care of 10,000 plants, if properly attended to; they must, however, be allowed a cook; but they will require additional hands while the crop is gathering; the number will, of course, depend upon the fertility of the vines. The vine blossoms twice a year, after the commencement of the rains in the setting in of the S. W. Monsoon, in April and May: and when they cease in December; the former crop is gathered the latter end of December, January, and February; the latter in May, June, and July.

The quality of the pepper depends, in a great measure, upon the care taken in the gathering and drying.

The pepper, when plucked before it is completely ripe, diminishes in size and weight, so much as frequently to occasion a difference of upwards of 30 per cent. between what is gathered in this state, and that which attains its full maturity. A pecul of pepper, if

allowed to remain on the vine till perfectly ripe, will yield from 35 to 36 catties, when dry.

The vine seldom fails of shewing much blossom in gardens which are properly taken care of; but it is subject to be blighted, even after the fruit has attained some size, when the season proves either unusually hot or dry;—when this happens, considerable quantities of pepper will drop off;—a few hours rain soon puts a stop to it. The pepper of this island, when gathered in a proper state, and carefully dried, is esteemed equal in taste, weight, and size, to that of any place whatever, and superior to most. European cultivators make their plantations by contract; the usual price is 225 dollars per thousand.⁽¹⁾ This includes every expense of tools, houses, digging wells, and clearing the ground, and every other item, the price of the young plant excepted. The pepper plant was first introduced into the island from Acheen, by the then captain China Che Kay, under the patronage of Mr. Light, who advanced him money for that purpose; this was about the year 1790.

(1) Covering about three English acres, at eight square feet to each plant.