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A
SHORT ACCOUNT
OF THE
PRINCE OF WALES'S ISLAND,
IN THE
EAST-INDIES.



E. Troupaud Del. View of the North Point of the Prince of Wales's Island, & the Ceremony of christening it. T. Meadon Sculp.
Published as the Act directs March 26. 1788. by J. Stockdale Piccadilly.

A
SHORT ACCOUNT
OF THE
PRINCE OF WALES'S ISLAND,
OR
PULO PEENANG,
IN THE
EAST-INDIES;

GIVEN TO
CAPT. LIGHT, BY THE KING OF
QUEDAH.

Ornamented with an elegant Engraving, representing
“ A View of the North Point of the PRINCE OF
“ WALES'S ISLAND, and the ceremony of christen-
“ ing it.”

TAKEN ON THE SPOT,
BY ELISHA TRAPAUD, Esq.

CAPTAIN IN THE ENGINEER CORPS ON THE MADRAS
ESTABLISHMENT.

ALSO A CHART, INCLUDING THE PLAN OF THE
ISLAND.

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E X P L A N A T I O N
O F T H E
F R O N T I S P I E C E.

TH E man with the paper in his hand, in a marine uniform, is Captain Light, reading the Governor General of Bengal's instructions ; the rest round him, captains of ships, passengers, &c. —The troops under arms in the back-ground, and the cannon ready to salute the new flag.—The ships
in

in the road, the Valentine and Van-
fittart.—The foldier on duty, under
the tree, is a Bengal marine; and
the two men fitting under the trees,
Malay men : the woman with the
pot on her head a Malay woman.—
The governor's tent, officers tents,
&c. &c.

The Purchasers of this Pamphlet may have, at the
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WITHIN
PULO PEENANG,
WITH
PART OF THE ADJACENT COAST OF
QUEDAH.

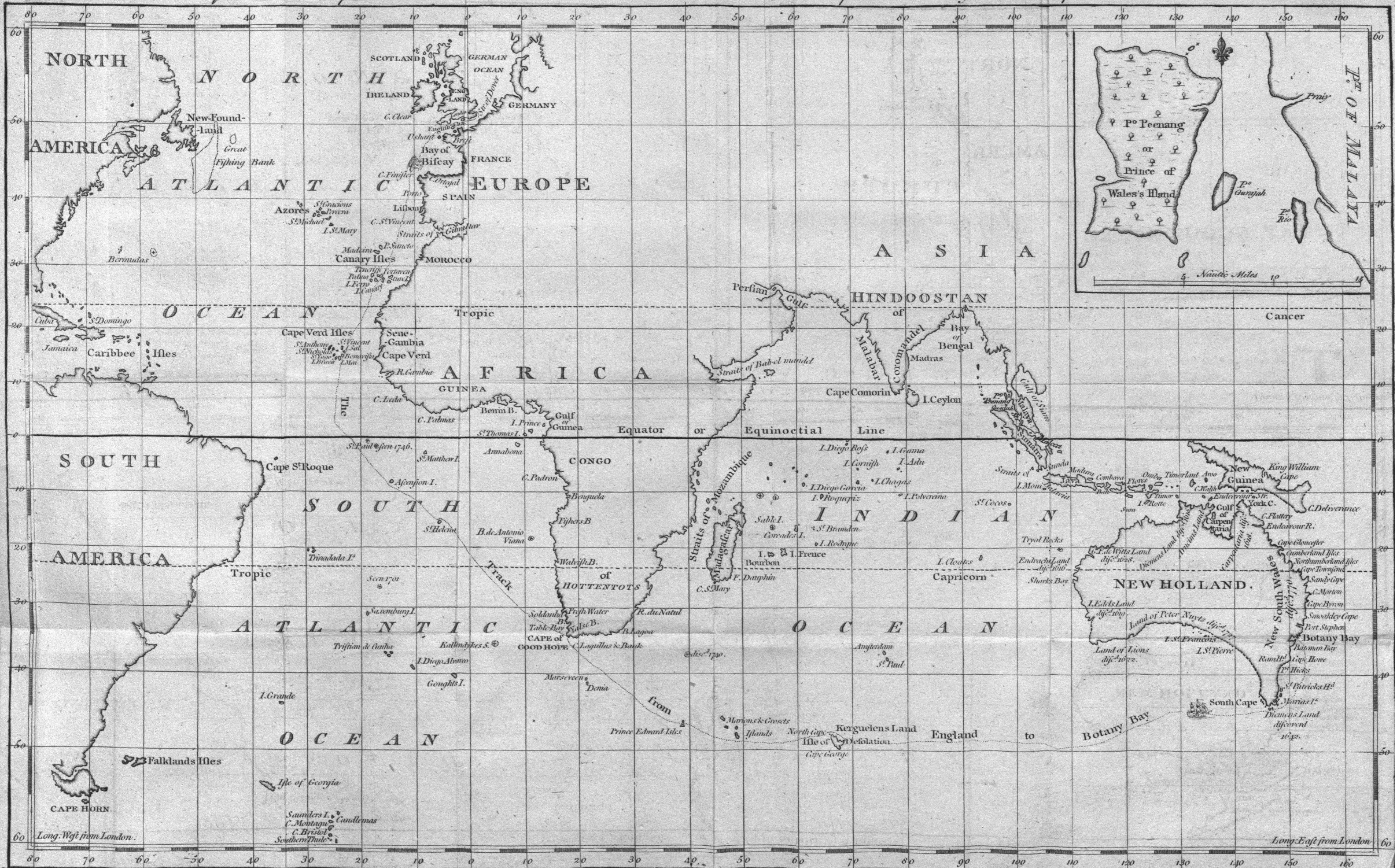
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[Price SIX-PENCE.]

A

A General Chart of the Atlantic & Indian Oceans, with the Situation & Plan of Pulo Peenang or Prince of Wales's Island.



A

SHORT ACCOUNT, &c.

THE island of Pulo Peenang, or Prince of Wales's Island, is situated in about $5^{\circ} 30'$ of north latitude, and $98^{\circ} 40'$ east longitude, at the entrance of the streights of Malacca, and close to the coast of Malaya, near the part
called

called Quedah, about a week's sail from the coast of Coromandel. The island is between thirty and forty miles in circumference, and was given by the king of Quedah to Captain Light, a gentleman in the India marine service, who has resided a long time amongst the Malays, and speaks their language perfectly. He had assisted the above prince in quelling some troubles in his dominions, who in return, bestowed on him a princess of his blood in marriage, together with this island as her dower. Captain Light, who is
 extremely

extremely well beloved amongst the Malays, chose to marry the princess according to the fashions of her own country.

As these are something curious, it may not be amiss to say a word or two concerning the mode of courtship and marriage used in general amongst the Malays of Quedah. Marriage here, contrary to the customs of most other nations in the East, is a regular treaty between the parties, on the foot of equality. There is, however, a present made to the girl's friends, which is usu-

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ally twelve dollars. The marriage compact stipulates, that all effects, gains or earnings, are to be equally the property of both, and in case of divorce by mutual consent, the stock, debts and credits are to be equally divided. If the man insists on the divorce, he gives the woman her half of the effects, and loses the twelve dollars. If the woman only claims the divorce, she forfeits her right to half the effects, but is entitled to keep her paraphernalia, and her relations are to pay back the twelve dollars, if demanded.

On

On the wedding day, the friends, slaves and domesticks of the parties are richly habited, and set before the houses of the bride and bridegroom many pikes with fringes of white cotton and red, and discharge several guns. In the afternoon the bridegroom goes from his own house to the bride's, in the following manner. Four men walk first with several sticks fastened to a pole, which others strike with little sticks. These are followed again by others, who carry long drums, which they beat either with sticks or their hands. After these, others strike

against sticks tied about their necks, and of them there are often sixty, eighty, or an hundred, according to the condition of the bridegroom. Then you see others again with peacocks feathers and horses tails; and they are followed by thirty or forty armed with darts, swords and shields, who from time to time stop in the streets to strike together, or dance, for the diversion of the spectators. There are others with drums and sticks, followed by thirty young women richly drest, some carrying flowers, others pictures, little gilt boxes, moveables and habits

bits of all sorts, as presents from the bridegroom to the bride. The women follow immediately, who likewise carry divers pieces of household stuff. The bridegroom is on horseback, richly drest, having two of his most intimate friends riding on each side of him, and a great number of persons invited to the wedding conclude the shew. When they are come to the bride's house, all the drums stay for the bridegroom at the door; and the men that carry the arms make a lane for the women that have the furniture; after whom the bridegroom arriving, he dismounts, and then

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the bride appears with a vessel of water, who on her knees washes his feet, and taking him by the hand, leads him into the house, where they continue some time together. Then he, leading her by the hand, goes out with all the company, and, in the same order as before, they go to his house, where the bridegroom enters first, then all the guests, who are entertained with marriage feasts for three days together.

Whether these were precisely the ceremonies that took place on the marriage of Capt. Light with
the

the Malay Princefs, we will not pretend to determine; this, however, is certain, that the ifland of Pulo Peenang, which was given with her in dowry, he, as a fubject of Great-Britain, took poffeffion of in the name of his Britannick Majefty, for the ufe of the Englifh Eaft-India Company.

This was about three or four years ago. The ifland, however, continued without a name, to mark it as an appendage to the Britifh empire, until Auguft 11, 1786, which being the eve of

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the Prince of Wales's birth-day, the island was then named after his Royal Highness, by Captain Light the governor, the following officers and gentlemen being present at the hoisting of the flag, *viz.*

Captain Light, the governor.

Lieut. Gray, commanding one
hundred native Bengal marines.

(These two gentlemen had landed on the island about a fortnight before, and were living in tents.)

Captain

Captain Lieut. Trapaud, of the
engineers.

Captain Richard Lewin, com-
manding the Vanfittart.

Captain Thomas Wall, com-
manding the Valentine.

Captain Glaſs, commanding a
country ſhip.

Captain Howel, Bengal artillery,
a paſſenger.

Mr. George Smith, merchant, a
paſſenger.

Mr. John Beatſon, merchant, a
paſſenger.

The produce of the Prince of Wales's Island, is wood, cattle, hogs, poultry, canes, and rice where cultivated, together with fruit and vegetables, all in the greatest abundance, and at the most reasonable rates. It is supposed also to produce black tin. Whether amber or gold dust be amongst its productions, was not ascertained at the time when the above ceremony took place.

The part of the Island marked out for his first settlement, by Captain Light, and at present
pretty

pretty numerously inhabited, is a flat sandy spot to the north-west, where the coast runs in a circular form, the opposite continent running also in a parallel direction for a considerable distance, and so close to the island as to form what may be called a river rather than a strait, on account of its narrowness.

In this channel, ships of the largest burthen may lie with great safety, as the depth of water is from five to fifteen fathom, and there are several good bays in it

where vessels may careen and be hove down.

The political importance of such a spot to our East-India possessions, particularly if the French continue their footing at Trincomalay, may easily be conceived from the following observations. In the bay of Bengal, from the month of October to March, the winds, called monsoons, blow from the north, and during the rest of the year, from the south. Preceding the change from one to the other, there is generally an interval of several days, in which calms and light winds

winds prevail. The northern monsoon often sets in with a violent tempest or hurricane on the coast of Coromandel, and even if it sets in with moderation, it is often productive of tempestuous weather, at different intervals, until the middle of December; so that it is held dangerous for any vessel to remain on the coast later than the twelfth of October, or to return to it before the beginning of January. It is on account of this danger, to which ships are exposed at the above season, that our fleets always quit the coast of Coromandel
(where

(where there is no harbour to protect them) every year in the month of October, and are generally obliged to go round to Bombay, particularly if they have occasion for refitting in time of war; a rendezvous, which, on account of its distance from the principal scene of action in the Bay of Bengal, is extremely disadvantageous, as was particularly felt in the late war, when the enemy, from their possession of Trincomalay, reaped every advantage of so favourable a situation, and swept the Bay with their
cruisers

cruisers immediately after the change of the monsoon, before our fleet could have time to arrive from Bombay. And what is still worse, this unavoidable delay is often, at critical periods in time of war, attributed by the country powers to the superiority of our enemies, as they seldom look for causes, but ever establish their opinions according to actual events; a circumstance which may often be attended with very serious consequences to our political operations on shore, where the French agents
are

are ever active on such occasions to magnify any casual advantage.

These inconveniencies, resulting from the want of a harbour on the coast of Coromandel, are likely to be removed by the new establishment of Pulo Peenang, which, as was before mentioned, is only a week's sail from that coast : and it is to be observed, that the violence of the monsoons is generally confined to about seventy miles in breadth, although in their progress they blow quite across the Bay of Bengal.

This

This island will therefore afford shelter for our East-India-men that lose their passage to China; an object in many respects of the greatest importance, as they have hitherto been under the necessity of wintering either at Malacca or Batavia, where the expences have proved very exorbitant, and the health of our seamen been much impaired by the inclemency of the climate. But an advantage, if possible, of still greater consequence to be derived from this settlement, is, that men of war may winter and refit here; for besides wood

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in the greatest abundance, there are also very large trees on the island, fit for masts; a circumstance obviously of the greatest utility both to our merchantmen and king's ships. Formerly our men of war were obliged to go to Bombay and Trincomalay for the purpose of refitting, which has not only proved very expensive to the nation, but also much time has been lost by the distance of these ports from the scene of action in the Bay of Bengal; whereas, by the situation of the Prince of Wales's Island, ships can make
the

the coast near Madras any season of the year.

Besides the foregoing advantages, there are many circumstances which make such a settlement as the Prince of Wales's Island of the greatest importance to our trade in the East-Indies ; for, deprived as we now are of our principal marts for the sale of opium (the Dutch having taken possession of Rhio and Salingan) if some place of safety is not established to which the Bug-gesses can resort to make their purchases, we must soon give up all

pretensions to the Malay trade, which will be wholly monopolized by the Dutch, and of course materially affect the Company's revenues, as well as their trade in the sale of opium: for, by being the sole venders, they must be the only purchasers, and by having no rivals, they will only purchase at their own price. While the Company stands pledged to the nation to provide the sole supplies of tea, it is certainly of the first importance to their interest, to be furnished with money in China to make their purchases. This object would be
much

much facilitated by the new settlement, as the greatest part of the proceeds arising from the Malay trade would be deposited there, and afterwards shipped to China, where nearly the whole money arising from the sales would be paid into the Company's treasury for bills on the Court of Directors; thereby providing the Company with large sums to make their purchases, and diverting the remittance of private fortunes from foreign channels (so baneful to the public good) to one highly beneficial both to public and private interest.

The

The flat spot, mentioned as the part of the island that is principally inhabited, may contain a circumference of three or four miles : it is sandy : the rest of the island is mountainous, and the soil of the latter, in all probability, clay.

Whether there are any rivers on the island is uncertain ; but there are springs of fresh water on the inhabited spot, which afford plenty of that element for the use of the inhabitants and others.

Captain

Captain Light had some idea of building a temporary fort, with fascines, gabions, &c. but we are informed, that, as it is meant to make a permanent settlement on the island, they have built, or are building, a brick fort, which, whether it is to have a name distinct from the island, is not yet ascertained.

On the day that the island received its name, there were one hundred Bengal Sepoys encamped on it, who were commanded by Lieut. Gray; but since that time

the command has been given to Lieut. Glaſs, and two companies of Sepoys and ſome European artillery have been added. They had then fix guns of different calibres, which have probably been augmented ſince.

Captain Light expected a great number of families from Quedah and its environs, to people his new government ; and, as he is extremely well liked amongſt the Malays, we may reaſonably conclude, when the fort is built, and they are not afraid of being moleſted by the Dutch, whose

whose vicinity at Malacca makes them very jealous of this new establishment, that five or six hundred families (Malays) are now resident on the island, besides considerable numbers of Chinese, more of whom are coming over every day.

Thus this inconsiderable spot, which perhaps formerly was of no manner of use even to the prince who claimed it as part of his dominions, may now, under the judicious encouragement given by the East-India Company to the

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settlement of it, become a place of considerable advantage to our trade, by affording shelter and protection at all times to our East-India ships, and a source of equal annoyance to our enemies, in case of a rupture with any of the powers who possess influence or actual dominion in the east.

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