

SECOND
PRIZE

Empire Essay, Class B

Class "B"

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ROYAL SCHOOL - BATH

(48)

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

~~Write me in pure Latin~~

The Aims and Achievements
of Sir Stamford Raffles.

2nd Prize
Sally ✓

Stamford Raffles was born early in June, 1781, on board his father's ship off Port Morant, Jamaica. Very little is known of his early life until he went to a boarding school in Hammersmith at the age of twelve. His father was very poor and badly in debt, however, and so he left school at the age of fourteen and became an extra clerk in the East India Company. He was always sad that circumstances had forced him to leave school before his education was complete. For five years he worked very hard at his job in the daytime, and in the evenings he continued his studies in English, French and Biology. In 1800 he obtained a much better post and continued to work so hard that he began to overwork himself. The only holiday he is known to have taken at this time was spent walking to Wales and back, which cured him for some time. Five years later he was appointed Assistant Secretary to the governor of a new British acquisition, the island of Penang. His salary was increased to £1,500 a year, enabling him to marry an accomplished widow, Olivia Fancourt. Until her death in 1815 she never ceased to aid him in his work whenever possible. On the voyage out to Malaya he set himself to learn the language,

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which helped him a great deal to get to know the natives. He grew to love them, and became an expert on their people. It was at this time that the idea of protecting these defenseless people first occurred to him.

He continued to overwork himself, and soon became very ill. He went for a holiday to Malacca, where he learnt that Britain was planning to evacuate the natives from the island to strengthen Penang. He carried out some research into this problem and then wrote a report on it. He sent it to his superior who forwarded it to India House, where it was highly commended and the British policy abandoned in favour of Raffles's suggestions. In his report Raffles showed for the first time his policy that the ignorant natives could not be left unprotected from their enemies. He argued that the natives could not be removed from the island where they had lived for generations. On the other hand, they could not be left entirely unprotected, and so Britain could not very well abandon the island. He also pointed out that Malacca was a far better strategic point than Penang, and for that reason, as well as the fact that the natives paid their revenue well, the British should stay there, and perhaps attempt to gain all Malaya from that point.

Round about this time Raffles met

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and became very friendly with John
Keyden, a Scottish surgeon, who was
also very interested in safeguarding the
rights of the natives. Keyden later became
a confidential advisor to Lord Minto,
the Governor General of India, thus giving
Raffles a much easier method of
communicating with his superiors.

In 1810 Raffles left ~~Java~~ Penang and
went to Calcutta, where he was given
the job of finding any detail concerning
Java. He was sent ahead of Lord Minto's
proposed expedition to capture the island
from the Dutch, and allowed to choose
his own headquarters. He eventually
settled on Malacca. He made many detailed
reports on the Archipelago, in the last of
which he suggested that the native chiefs
should be persuaded to own the Governor
General of India as their overlord, since they
had formerly been ruled by an emperor.
Minto came out in May, leading the
expedition himself. By the end of July
the ~~the~~ British fleet had arrived at
Batavia. When the Dutch surrendered
Java on September 11th Raffles became
Lieutenant Governor.

During the Dutch occupation of Java
their organisation had been very corrupt.
The Malays were merely employed to gain
a cash profit, and when they disobeyed
the regulations they were severely punished,
sometimes whole tribes being wiped out.
Most of the island was ruled by

native chiefs who had Dutch advisers at their courts. These were very corrupt and made a great deal of money by taxing the natives unfairly.

Raffles set to work to remedy all this. He appointed British residents to the rulers and controlled the revenue. He stopped forced labour and remodelled the system of justice, using Dutch Colonial law, abolishing torture, and innovating trial by jury. He also made many reports concerning Javanese resources and peoples. By June 1812 the whole island was peaceful under his rule as he trusted the Malays, and, refusing to have a bodyguard, made himself available to everyone.

In 1813 Raffles quarrelled with General Gillespie, the military commander, over the amount of troops to be kept on the island. Lord Minto supported Raffles and so Gillespie was relieved and succeeded by General Nightingale. In the last two years of Raffles's governorship the value of paper money dropped considerably. To raise government funds he sold some public property with the approval of Lord Minto, but not of the court of directors. As soon as Lord Minto left India General Gillespie accused Raffles of doing wrong in Java. He was cleared eventually, however.

In 1814, despite Raffles's appeals to the Earl of Buckingham, Java was returned to the Dutch, although they did not take possession until 1816. In 1815 Raffles was recalled. He had lost his wife in the same

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year and he himself was not strong, having been overworked as a result of being an expert on the islands as well as their Governor. He had also entertained a great deal.

His health compelled him to return to Europe for a holiday. He sailedⁱⁿ March 1816, meeting, at St. Helena, Napoleon, who was very interested in the islands of Malay. In July he reached London, where he was immediately admitted into society, making several lasting friendships with wellknown personages. Among them was Wilberforce, who interested him in the abolition of slavery and the spreading of the gospel. These influences showed much in later years. Raffles also wrote a History of Java which he dedicated to the Prince Regent, being rewarded by a knighthood. He travelled in Europe, went to Holland, and also married his second wife, Sophia Hull.

In 1817 he was appointed governor of Bencoolen. In 1818, when he took office, he found the place in ruins, the pepper crop neglected and gamecocks the only source of revenue. He made friends with the neighbouring chiefs, established schools and police, and stopped the Dutch enlarging their property illegally. He freed the East India Company's two hundred slaves and induced all native chiefs to do the same. In 1821 he sent Commissioners to the island of Pulo Nias which was a

very cruel centre of the slave trade. He took the chiefs there under British protection. He also stopped the compulsory cultivation of pepper.

Raffles made several expeditions into the interior of Sumatra with his wife. On one of these he and his doctor and naturalist found a new flower, later named *Rafflesia-Arnoldi* after them.

He later found a new flower at Singapore.

At this time the Dutch were busy fitting out expeditions to win all the strategic points in the Malay Archipelago.

In 1818 Raffles went to Calcutta in an attempt to persuade Hastings to take control of Singapore, a place he had long seen would help British trade and keep the Dutch from sole possession of all the islands. At the same time he was given authority over all the British possessions east of the Straits of Malacca.

On his advice Singapore was bought from the sultan of Johore, and in February, 1819, Raffles hoisted the British flag there. The small outpost grew very quickly, and became a very important port, especially after the cutting of the Suez Canal, saving well over one thousand miles of sailing.

The Dutch protests soon faded out, and in 1824 Britain, by a friendly agreement, renounced Sumatra and Bencoolen, ~~and~~ kept Singapore and gained Malacca.

When Raffles returned to Bencoolen in 1819, while it was still British, he

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founded more schools and a Bible Society
and imported some missionaries from
India. He also wanted to form a native
college in Singapore and urged the directors
to have one central government in the
Malay islands. In Bencoolen he formed
an Agricultural Society and encouraged
the natives to grow coffee and sugar.
By 1820, thanks to all his efforts,
Bencoolen was a thriving community.

At this time Raffles was very happy
with his family, but in 1821 three of his
children and several of his closest
friends died, while he and his
wife were very ill.

He was still very proud of Singapore
and its growth, and in 1822 decided to
visit it again. He found that Farquhar,
his temporary governor had disobeyed
him by licensing cockfighting and gambling,
and selling land set aside for public
buildings. He had also allowed the
slave trade to enter the colony. Raffles
soon ~~prohibite~~ prohibited the slave trade,
liberated slaves, made gambling illegal,
rebought the lost sites, removed the
buildings, and made plans to improve
the town. He also devised some system
of government by which all the
different nations^{alities} could be ruled
peacefully. He set up twelve British
merchants as magistrates, used trial
by jury, under British law. He also
made Singapore a free port, paying no

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duty on trade. In 1823 he founded a college where all learning, especially Chinese and Malay literature, was to be taught. This was the climax of his work for Singapore, for in June his health made it compulsory for him to leave the east. He sailed from Singapore for the last time, taking with him all his collection of Malay treasures. He spent some time at Bencoolen, and on February 2nd 1824, he set sail for England. However his ship caught fire, and he and his wife narrowly escaped, all his most treasured possessions being lost, uninsured. On April 10th he set out for the last time, on reaching St. Helena finding that his mother had died. He landed in England in August.

He wrote several reports on Malaya and had some maps engraved. In 1826 he became the first president of the Zoological Society, which was granted ground in Regent's Park.

He also bought an estate at High Wood near Barnet, near that of Wilberforce.

On April 12th 1826, when he was hoping to receive some type of annuity from the East India Company he was charged with using the Company's money illegally. He could not pay all the amount claimed, and eventually his wife had to pay some of it after his death. He died

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of apoplexy early on July 5th 1826 at the
age of forty four.

One of Raffles's main aims was to make the British Empire more powerful and influencing. His ambition for Singapore was to make it a centre of culture and learning as well as one of trade. He succeeded in much of this in his life time, but after his death all his wishes came true.

Another aim was to help the natives to gain peace and security, and it can be said that he never left natives unprotected when he could, and did all in his power to help them. Although in his lifetime Raffles's actions were considered as rather overstepping the mark, it can be said that all he did, much of it with great effect for good, was done in the great cause of the British Empire. Singapore stands today as a lasting memorial to the greatness of his aims and achievements.

1909 words

Books.

Raffles - Coupland.

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