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 Fauconnet. 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.
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
Wakefield and became very friendly with John Eyden, a Scottish surgeon, who was also very interested in safeguarding the rights of the natives. Eyden 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 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 overlords, since they had formerly been ruled by an emperor. Minto came out in May, leading the expedition himself. By the end of July the British fleet had arrived at Batavia. When the Dutch surrendered Java on September 11 Raffles became lieutenant governor.

During the Dutch occupation of Java their organisation had been very corrupt. The Javanese 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
nature 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
Wakesfield. 

Memo we impune lacesse
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 sailed in March 1816, meeting, at St. Helena, Napoleon, who was very interested in the island of Malay. In July he reached London, where he was immediately admitted into society, making several lasting friendships with well-known personages. Among these 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 Hule.

In 1819 he was appointed Governor of Bengkulu. 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 Pulau 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-Arundalei 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, kept Singapore and gained Malacca.

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


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 cock-fighting and gambling, and selling land set aside for public buildings. He had also allowed the slave trade to enter the colony. Raffles soon prohibited the slave trade, liberated slaves, made gambling illegal, re-bought 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 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
duty on trade. In 1828 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 Highwood near Banest, 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
Class 8. Wakefield. Demo me impune lacesse. 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 lifetime, 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.

Books.
Raffles - Coupland.
Dictionary of National Biography. Vol XVII.