



Rice Cultivation.

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RAJA BOT'S VIEWS.

A COMMUNICATION from Raja Bot of Selangor (who is about 60 years of age) to the Sultan and the Resident-General has been published by the *Malay Mail*. The Raja says of his early days, the year 1850 or thereabouts:—

I remember that the kinds of rice eaten by men in the Malay country were as follows:—
(1) Javanese rice, very good in quality, with only a short stem like the present Rangoon rice, only a little smaller. (2) Siamese rice. (3) Rangoon Rice. (4) Rice from Acheen. (5) Rice from Malacca. Those were the five places which produced rice eaten in this country.

In olden times my grandfather, Sultan Muhammad of Selangor, was himself very fond of planting paddy and also rigorously insisted on all his subjects doing so too. There were tools, and men, moreover, to work. Those who were slow or who did not toil at paddy planting were punished. On the Selangor river from Teluk Penyamun, on the right bank, and on the left as far as Kumpong Kedah in the interior, nothing but paddy fields could be seen in those days. I well remember that in 1273 (A. H.) the year in which Sultan Muhammad was buried, I bought Selangor rice at the rate of a hundred gantangs for \$5, and paddy at the rate of a hundred gantangs for \$2.50: ducks, fowls and goats were cheap, because in those days every kind of provision was plentiful and abundant.

In 1273 (A. H.) Sultan Muhammad died and was succeeded by Sultan Abdul Samad. There were then "sawahs" in Selangor, while on the Langat river men planted "ladangs." In 1276 (A. H.) rinderpest broke out, and it may be said that all the buffaloes in Selangor died: there remained only ten or twelve, which escaped into the jungle and became wild. These are now in the neighbourhood of Jeram. The result of this was that the Selangor "raiahs" ceased working "sawahs," having lost, as it were, the chief implement of their trade. Sultan Abdul Samad was not powerful enough to insist on the work being continued, for though he himself liked paddy planting he could not enforce it upon the "raiahs" of the country.

In 1275 (A. H.) for the first time, a duty was imposed upon tin, nothing else being taxed. The duty was 20 per cent. Subsequently the truck system at the mines ceased, and within the next two years the Chinese merchants asked that the 20 per cent. should be abolished, and 10 per cent. taken on tin. A tax was placed on opium, \$2 a



oil, and on rice, \$4 a koyan. These were the three articles taxed.

The price of white Java rice was \$58 to \$60 a koyan. Siam rice was \$3 less, while that from Rangoon was \$45 a koyan. The last named was not at that time much liked by the Chinese. White Acheen rice was from \$37 to \$38, and red Acheen rice \$27 to \$28 a koyan. Malacca rice was sometimes the same price as the Javanese, sometimes as the Siamese variety. The price of tin in Malacca was within \$2 or \$3, more or less, of \$60 a bhara, which is three pikuls. The people of Selangor rarely then went as far as Singapore, trading only with Malacca and Penang merchants.

In 1276 (A. H.) less rice began to come from Java, because the land formerly occupied by paddy was now planted by the Dutch with sugar-cane, owing to the fact, so said the Javanese who came hither, that sugar was far more profitable than paddy. A year or two afterwards the supply of rice from Acheen also began to diminish. The reason of this was that the men of Acheen planted black pepper, which they sold at a high price, though the cultivation of paddy was light work compared with that of pepper and sugar. Moreover in Malacca, where formerly there had been numerous paddy planters, the Chinese merchants roused themselves, opened up gardens, and grew potatoes and sago. Coolies were required for the work and good wages were offered. Thus it came to pass that many Malay planters, attracted by the high wages, became labourers for the merchants in their gardens. This practically ruined the cultivation, and from that time Malacca, Java and Acheen altogether lost their reputation for growing rice. Thereafter only a small quantity was produced.

In the year 1276 (A. H.) rinderpest broke out. One district in Selangor, i.e., Sungei Lukut, was then putting out a large quantity of tin, and Selangor men came and traded in Lukut, getting \$3 and \$4 for goods usually sold at \$1. The natural result was that the art of paddy planting was almost forgotten. My people made large gain at Lukut, and also opened up Sungei Klang and Kuala Lumpur, tin mining being conducted at a profit in 1279 (A. H.). These were the two places in Selangor where tin mining existed in 1281 (A. H.). My grand-parents died at Lukut, leaving my father there.

I beg leave to suggest that Your Highness should arrange a conference with the Resident-General and the Resident, Selangor, who are representatives of the English Government, which has helped and perfected the conditions of the country, in connection with the Malays of every class who dwell in Selangor. I think that a new law should be passed laying down the method of working and planting paddy, and enforcing planting by the imposition of rigorous punishments (gaol or fine) on the disobedient and lazy. This might remedy a bad state of affairs, for I crave permission to remind you that Malays are so constituted that unless such a law is rigorously enforced nothing whatever will come of it. You have only to look back to the days of Sultan Muhammad, in 1273 (A. H.) when the law of the ruler was strict, and "sawahs" flourished in Selangor. After his death there was no one who instructed the "raiahs," with the result that for the last 47 years they have been extremely remiss regarding paddy planting. Unless there is strong legislation and a strong hand to enforce it, the cultivation of paddy will never succeed.

Your Highness who has reigned for five

years, and four months, who for ten years, as Resident and Resident-General, has caused English justice and prosperity to prevail in Selangor, will be conferring a great benefit upon the people by a consideration of the rice question. I ask then that Your Majesty and the Resident-General will settle the method of rice cultivation and enforce it upon the Malays by a new law, providing penalties and fines for evasion.

I trust that my dissertation will be excused. I have not spoken for the mere sake of giving my history, but because in my time the price of rice has risen from \$1.50 to \$5.60, more than three times as much. For the last three or four years the price has been steadily rising. This year I have suffered heavily, for last year when I had got my money from the office and paid off my debts for food there still remained \$20 or \$30; this year only \$1 or \$2 are left over. Every kind of necessary has risen in price, and the trouble and anxiety resulting therefrom have emboldened me to approach you on this subject.

THE BOOK OF the MOMENT is said to be "The Confessions of a Wife." According to the *Sketch* this book is intended, apparently, to follow in the wake of "An English-woman's Love-Letters." They are said to be written by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, the author of "The Gates Ajar," and certainly they are in her style.

