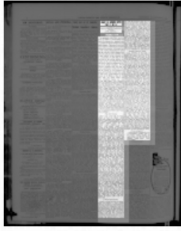




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## WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE F. M. S.

Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle, 2 December 1922, Page 4

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## WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE F. M. S.

THE TIN-MINING INDUSTRY.





(STH ARTICLE),

BY

J. C. PASQUAL.

The prosperity of the F.M.S. has been built up entirely by the tin mines, and their very existence in a continued state of prosperity is mainly dependent on this staple industry. Take away tin and these States with their cumbrous and expensive system of Government will collapse like a house of cards, dragging down in their fall the tottering rubber industry from which so much had been expected and so little realized. It will, therefore, not be uninteresting to look back on the early days of the mining industry and hastily run the eyes down the pages of the history of mining in Malaya from the time of the British occupation. On my arrival in Selangor there was quite a boom in mining and people were scouring the country in every direction in search of fresh fields, now that there was a stable form of Government and the misrule of the Malays a thing of the past. The old mines which had been abandoned during the war of the Boer had been reopened






not by the Chinese merchants of Malacca who had had enough of tin mining and were concentrating their activities on tapioca, but by new comers from China most of whom began life as "sinkehs" to the Capitans China and the few remaining mining towkays who had weathered the troublous times and stuck to the country. Capital was the last thing taken into consideration as the tin ores were within easy reach from the surface and, in some places, were literally strewn on the ground in coarse grains easily picked with the hand, and all the equipments necessary were muscles, a changkol and basket, endurance and optimism. Every Chinaman who had worked off his debts to his towkay and saved a few dollars would take to mining on his own account, and a good many of the tin magnates of later days began life in this way.

#### THE PUDU FIELD.


There was a big rush for Pudu, which is two or three miles from Kuala Lumpur, and perhaps the richest, or rather the best paying tin field ever known in the Peninsula, not even excepting NL Taiping, where the tin gravels were situated at a greater depth though equally rich. Known to the Chinese as Pun-san-pa (half jungle) Pudu is an extensive valley of several thousand acres in area and was the most ideal placer ground imaginable as the workings were shallow and the ore deposits, overlying a limestone bottom, occurred within 3 or 4 feet from the surface. Claims were pegged out all over the valley, and in the frantic haste to get rich the forest trees were sometimes left standing to be undermined as it was too much waste of time and money to fell and burn in the usual manner. A few men would pool their slender savings and own and work a claim in common, sinking shallow pits in the ground and abstracting the ore in the most primitive fashion in a few days. The deeper deposits carried ores in greater abundance and those who had made sufficient capital from the shallower pits would sink it all in the more expensive venture of a deep mine which entailed the extra equipment of a water-wheel and wooden chain pump to cope with the water. Pudu was the






poor man's land—quite reminiscent of the gold rush of Australia and California—and laid the foundation of several fortunes, the most prominent of which was that of the late Capitan Yap Quan Seng, who began life as an immigrant and struck oil in a mine on the deep side of the Pudu valley which to my knowledge had never bottomed. The wealth that came out of Pudu may be imagined when it is considered that it took thirty years to work out the ground whose hidden riches seemed inexhaustible, for the same pits were worked over and over again and the tailings never failed to yield ore in payable quantities each time they were raked up and panned out by fossickers. This was due to the wasteful method of sluicing adopted by the early miners, but the Chinese believed for a long time that tin in Pudu kept growing and to this day solitary men and women may be seen eking out a living with their dulangs in isolated spots in this now desert plain.



#### A MULTI-MILLIONAIRE.



Another famous rush was for Sungei Belak, near Cheras, a virgin ground where the deposits were deep seated and men poured in in thousands to work the open-cast mines on the truck system for some rising towkays, the most prominent of whom were Chow Yoke and Chow Heng, two brothers who were not on speaking terms and were continually quarrelling over their water rights. They were the two of the richest men in Kuala Lumpur, the former being a great favourite of Resident Rodger who helped



him with Government loans and gave him the leases of the various farms, as Chow Yoke was a most enterprising man and the Resident knew that every assistance rendered to him would be amply repaid by the rapid opening up and progress of the State whose welfare seemed to be his chief aim in life. Chow Yoke was later on joined by the late Dr. Loke Yew who emigrated from Perak where he began life as a sinkeh on a salary of \$4 a year and ended it six years ago as one of the wealthiest multi-millionaires in the East. The colossal Estate of Loke Yew, estimated at \$50,000,000, now towers high over the F. M. S. in silent contemplation of the sad financial





chaos which has overwhelmed these States, whose fortunes its late owner had followed from the very beginning and helped to build up in no small measure.

#### PRIMITIVE MINING CODE.

Closely following on the heels of Sungei Balak came the rush to Sungei Ramal, an adjacent valley also in the Cheras district. A great portion of this valley was claimed by one Inche Abo, an old Malacca Malay, who kept dogcarts for hire and resided in the village of Cheras on his little coffee plantation. He was levying a tribute on the mines, and was waxing rich on the proceeds when he ran up against the Chinese owner of the adjacent land who refused to pay tribute, and appealed to the Government to define their boundary line which was in dispute. This was no easy matter, as for the sum of \$5 for a mining license land was given out in those days in an easy going, haphazard fashion without any definite boundaries other than the name of the stream or "Sungei" in which the concession was located and an arrow mark blazed on the bark of a tree somewhere downstream in the valley as the point through which an imaginary line might be drawn to demarcate one concession from another. This arrow was said to be lost, and Felton Hill (whom I accompanied on the occasion), the new Inspector of Mines, who came from Australia with the reputation of having walked across the island continent, was not to be easily fooled by the disputants, as his eyes trained in the Australian bush, quickly discovered the missing arrow over which the bark of the tree had grown, but was still distinguishable standing out in faint relief against the dark background. Hill had his work cut out in those days in settling boundary disputes and quarrels and fights over water rights, as there were no mining codes by which to be guided, and on one occasion saved his life by running along a deep water-race to safety, when one Yam Lam, who owned the first deep mine in Sungei Besi, ordered his coolies to kill him. Yam Lam was sent to prison for seven years for this, but became famous as the man who gave his name to the village (now officially called S. Besi) near which he was mining. This was nearly 30 years ago and Yam Lam's mine is still being



ago and Tam Lam's mine is still being worked to this day by the Tronoh Tin Mining Co., and seems to be a bottomless excavation carrying phenomenal wealth.

(To be continued.)

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