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The Straits Times, 5 July 1909, Page 7

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THROUGH JOHORE.

OPENING RUN ON THE NEW
STATE RAILWAY.

Some Minor Mishaps.

POINTS OF INTEREST FOR THE
INTENDING TRAVELLER.

Feats of Engineering.

Now that a railway has been constructed right through the heart of Johore and European planters have turned their attention to that State as a suitable field for the cultivation of rubber and other permanent products, Johore is offered a great opportunity of getting into line with its neighbours. Unless, however, efforts are made to develop the country and especially to feed the railway by good roads, the opportunity will be lost and the railway will fail to do for Johore what it has done with such splendid success for the Federated States, every one of which was, 30 years ago, far more backward of Johore at the same time.

These were words written by Sir Frank Swettenham in 1897, and they are as true to-day as they were twelve years ago. Close upon a hundred miles of the densest jungle wall in the line practically its whole length gave where enterprising planters have put their axes to forest trunks in order that Johore might take its place with other States in the great rubber industry of Malaya. The country is devoid of roads that can serve a useful purpose in the process of development, and it was in this respect that pioneers of construction work on the line found the greatest difficulty. From above Labis glimpses may be had of the old transport track which had to be built in order that materials might be taken to the scene of activity. It was made of wood and is now rapidly falling into decay. Added to these difficulties of transportation was the unhealthy character of the country consequent upon the opening up of new territory, and one might well apply to Johore the observations of a Tamil station master on the Gemas-Tamping section who, when the line was first opened, wrote in his official book: "Train arrived up to time; train left up to time. Thank God. May He help and preserve me in this awful country." The old attap sheds used as hospital quarters when the line was being built are

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THIRD TEST MATCH.

THIRD TEST MATCH. ENGLAND LOSES MATCH BY 121 RUNS. Shocking Batting. JESSOP UNABLE

SUGAR FRAUDS IN JAPAN.

SUGAR FRAUDS IN JAPAN. [Rkdh's Tklkobam] London, July 5. A Tokio telegram says that twenty tlin l

AMERICAN TARIFFS.

AMERICAN TARIFFS. Fate of the Tea and Coffee Duties. [RSOTKIS TILMBAMS] London, July 4. The

Indian Murders.

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now rotting, while others have been burned, and in their places are substantial coolie quarters for the workmen attached to the section.

Constructional Details.

Begun four years ago the line, with the exception of a few miles, was constructed throughout through virgin jungle, the clearings now visible at certain points having followed construction. The total length, is 121 miles, 48 chains, and in the making of it, the difficulties inseparable from work in a jungle country were much increased by lack of facilities for transport. Work was begun from both ends and as the rails were laid down they formed in themselves an effective means of communication. To bring material up to points between the rail heads, three rivers were used. The ballast used on the northern section was quarried near the line, chiefly at Bekok and Segamat. Further south all the ballast came from Pulau Nanas. The sleepers for the first 40 miles north from Johore Bahru are made of Australian jarra wood, those on the rest of the line being of chengai obtained in Johore.

But a better idea of what has been accomplished and what remains to be done will be formed by a journey over the line. Take, for instance, the trip to Kuala Lumpur on the 1st inst., when the official opening of the railroad took place.

Singapore to Kuala Lumpur.

The guard's whistle sounded at Tank Road Station on the Singapore-Kranji line at 7.5 a.m. on Thursday. Rain was falling at the time and a dismal journey seemed to be threatening. Mr. J. H. Williams, the general manager, and three Press representatives were in the saloon and were joined subsequently by Mr. H. N. Ridley, who entered the train at Cluny and had the first ticket issued for Kuala Lumpur, the Sultan of Johore holding the first one issued at Johore Bahru. Straight across from Woodlands to the new landing stage at Johore Bahru the company was taken by ferry and found a large gathering of prominent officials and Malay gentry awaiting the departure of the first train. There was Mr. P. H. Henshaw, the acting traffic manager, from Kuala Lumpur, Mr. J. M. Sinclair, assistant engineer, and Mr. R. A. Blair, engineer, who has been looking after the southern section. Mr. Henshaw did not join the train which, punctually, at 8.17 was drawn out by the big engine, No. 8, in charge of a European driver, with a saloon coach, a second, one third, two brake thirds and five goods trucks following behind. In all, there were 68 passengers aboard, of whom but three, including two Pressmen, went on to Kuala Lumpur. Tampoi and Senai were reached quickly the train—passing through the deepest cutting on the line, 40 feet—being ahead of time and running beautifully over the track. Away over tree tops near Kulai could be seen the mountain of Pulau, 1,200 feet in height, poking its summit of foliage into a cap of ominous cloud. It was stated by one of the party that this would eventually be the sanatorium of Singapore, but Mr. Ridley, who was most entertaining during the journey with interesting reminiscences and anecdotes, soon dispelled that theory by pointing out that the place literally swarmed with the anopheles mosquito and was quite unsuited for such a purpose. Twenty-six miles from Johore Bahru the train steamed into Sedenak with the property of the Malaya General Company on either side. Five thousand acres of rubber, with tapioca as a catch crop, appear to be thriving, and with another 2,500 acres near Rengam should prove a valuable concession in course of time. Eight miles further on is Lyang-Lyang, the first w. & r. station after Johore Bahru, others on the line being at Niyor, 24 miles distant, and at Labis, 19 miles further on. Here the tanks can be replenished from an ample supply, while at each station passengers can quench their

thirst from filters close to the ticket offices. Rengam, Mengkibol and Niyor were passed seven, 15, and 24 miles respectively from Lyang-Lyang, the only feature of interest to note being the fact that near the last named station the train passes over an embankment 35 feet high, the record for the time.

Some Features.

While on the point of the figures it may be well to collate them at this stage. The ruling grade on the line is 1

in 100; the longest bridge is that over the Muar River—500 ft. long, in five spans each of 100 ft. in length. Another, over the Segamat, is 300 ft., and those over the Soudai, Sayong and Gemas, 200 ft., while quite a number are 100 ft. long. The highest point of the line is about 230 ft. above sea level, at a point near Rengam, while one of the most difficult engineering feats was the construction of the Endow bank just beyond Niyor where, for two miles, there is an embankment rising from the level of a mangrove swamp to a height of from 20 to 23 feet and swerving around to Bekok, 77 miles from the Johore terminus. It was here during the course of construction that an incident occurred illustrative of events which tended to break the monotony of jungle life. One evening a Mr. Hall was sitting in his bungalow when a black panther dashed through the room after his dog and nearly secured its prey which dashed round by the bed just in time to save an ugly maul from its claws.

Mishaps.

But this by the way. Labis is reached 87 miles from Johore Bahru and nine miles further the station at Tenang comes into view the hour, on 1st inst., being 12 54 p.m. At Segamat the down train from Kuala Lumpur was awaiting our arrival and after very little delay the engine steamed away to Buloh Kasap and on to Batu Anam. From here to Gemas the 47,500 acres Johore Lands Rubber Estates bound either side of the line and bear testimony to the industry of many coolies in clearing so vast an area in such a difficult country. And it was a good and somewhat prolonged view that the passengers by Thursday's train had of the property. At the 118th mile from the starting point an incline had to be negotiated; the train sped forward, suddenly it slowed down and eventually stopped and remained stationary for close upon two hours and a half. By this time it was close upon four o'clock, and those in the train who, earlier in the day had requested the officials at a way back station to order tiffin at Gemas were looking forward to a little refreshment. At length a puffing and panting ahead announced that we were about to proceed, and eight miles steaming brought the train to Gemas, where quite a little township has sprung up. Is is 121 miles from Johore Bahru, and the traveller from Singapore or Kuala Lumpur will find the first refreshment station where breakfast and tiffin baskets can be secured.

Away in the distance could be seen the wooded heights of Mount Ophir rising far above the background of jungle growth. In the early nineties the adjoining peak of Mount Meringa was scaled by Mr. Ridley who remembers distinctly hearing one afternoon the peculiar bell-like sound of a bamboo instrument swung upon the tree tops to locate to the Sakies the position of their homestead. Subsequently, he ascertained that their village was only some three miles distant, and although he was unable to trace them there is evidence to-day that of quite recent date they had a settlement on Tampin hill some 33 miles further along the line.

The next station of importance on the way up to Kuala Lumpur is Tampin and when Thursday's train arrived there delay was occasioned by an axlebox which was found to be smoking owing to the bearings having become overheated. This having been remedied the journey was renewed past fields of white lalang, rice fields and rubber. All went well until near Bangi where the train was doing some 85 miles an hour. Suddenly the embankment was illuminated and investigation showed that the oil in the axlebox was on fire. The guard was informed and hastened forward to notify the engine driver. Meanwhile, an oiler risked his life by climbing down to the axlebox, holding on by one hand and extinguishing the fire. The train was brought to a standstill and more oil was applied to the bearings. At 8 p.m. Seremban was reached, several hours late. Large crowds had assembled at this and at other stations and appeared to be keenly interested in the arrival of the first passenger train through from Singapore. The remainder of the journey, principally through tin land was without interest as darkness had long since crept in and when the train entered Kuala Lumpur station at 10.33 there were few aboard who were not ready for dinner and bed.

The Train.

Details have not yet been given of the



dimensions of the coaches on the Johore State Railway, and these we are now able to furnish through the courtesy of Mr. D. J. Highet, acting general manager, F. M. S. railways. Carriages on all classes are practically of the same dimension. Length, 59ft 6in. (nothing at home with the exception of the Great Western stock are as long; there are many carriages on English lines which do not exceed 52ft to 56ft. It is a long vehicle for a metre gauge.) Width, 8ft 9in. as compared with 9ft at home. Total weight of carriage, 25 tons. The first class coaches have a seating capacity for 24. Between the seats there are small dining tables which can be lowered to enable the seats to be drawn out and form a bed, while above there is bunk which can be lowered so as provide sleeping accommodation in each of the five compartments of the saloon for four passengers. At one end of the carriage is a compartment for ladies. The upholstering is of leather and the body of the car is built of teak and chenggi, while some of the panels are of white satin. Lavatories are attached to the cars, and oil is used as an illuminant. In the 2nd class cars accommodation is provided for 34 people, while on the 3rd class cars, 88 passengers can travel. Then there are the usual wagons, timber and coal trucks, all of which were built at Kuala Lumpur.

Regarding fares it will be interesting to some people to learn that the first class fare from Tank Road to Kuala Lumpur is \$15.16; to Penang \$29.83; to Ipoh \$22.96; to Malacca \$11.86; and to Port Swettenham \$16.78.

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