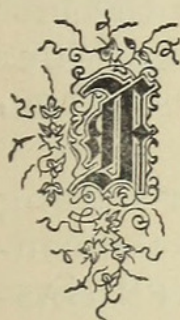


MEMOIR OF CAPTAIN FRANCIS LIGHT, WHO FOUNDED PENANG.

[DIED OCTOBER 21ST, 1794.]



FRANCIS LIGHT was born at "Dallington (? Dal-lingho) in Suffolk" about 1745, and came to the East at an early age in the Marine Service of the East India Co.

There is scarcely one of our Straits worthies of whom so few personal particulars are known. He has of course left official records, and several of his private letters have been printed and preserved. There is also the official Diary he kept during the first few months in Penang, which is printed in Logan's Journal Vol. III; but this is all. Captain LIGHT belongs to the "active period" of the Straits, to which, as in other places, the "literary period" succeeded. The latter began with MARSDEN and LEYDEN of "many-languaged lore," who commenced his journeys in Sumatra and the Peninsula in 1805. During the next fifty years there was no lack of scholars and writers in these countries.

But before their time almost the only English literature of the Far East consisted of accounts by ship captains, like DAMPIER and FORREST, of their own and others' voyages. In these narratives there is much that is useful; but we miss the literary side and the personal details that make LEYDEN, MARSDEN and RAFFLES seem so much more familiar to us than their predecessors.

The first heard of Captain LIGHT is in 1771, when he states he entered into correspondence with WARREN HASTINGS as to the desirability of a repairing harbour in these waters, recommending Penang as a "convenient magazine for the Eastern trade." There was no doubt negotiation for many years after in the intervals of trading tours.

In 1779, we come across Captain LIGHT in one of these voyages; more than one reference being made to him in the Journal* of Dr. KOENIG, the Danish Botanist, during that year. He met Captain LIGHT trading at Junk Ceylon in May, and at Malacca in November, 1779; and he refers to him in terms that show there was friendship between them, and that the Botanist found him an enlightened and sympathetic companion. It is curious that this MS. also contains for the first time a tolerably full mention of Penang and of the deep-water approaches in the North channel, which justified its selection by Captain LIGHT seven years later.

In 1780-1, a scheme had at last been matured for settling Junk Ceylon, through private subscription but with the consent of the Governor-General in Council (then WARREN HASTINGS). There is in the British Museum a Paper which bears on this scheme, being a description of Junk Ceylon transmitted by Captain LIGHT to Lord CORNWALLIS in his letter of 18th June, 1787.† The wars with the French and Dutch in 1781-3 delayed its execution, and shortly after Captain LIGHT decided on the superior merits of Penang harbour. He was at first for settling at one and the same time in both places; but when the friendly ruler of Junk Ceylon died in December, 1785, it was finally resolved by the Governor-General to make the experiment at Penang alone, which the young Raja of Kedah had offered to cede for \$6,000 a year.

In June, 1786, Captain LIGHT left Calcutta with Sir J. MACPHERSON'S authority to act. He was given 100 Native "new-raised Marines" and 30 Native Lascars, as well as 15 Artillerymen (European) and 5 Officers to support him in his undertaking to carry out the settlement of Penang. He first proceeded to Kedah. There he completed his negotiations, and provisioned his party. Sailing thence with three vessels on the evening of the 14th July, 1786, he anchored off Pulau Tikus the following day. The first two days he stayed on board, and was busy surveying the harbour and testing the

* In MS. in British Museum (translated S. A. S. Journal 27.)

† See Logan's Journal, Vol. V, and p. 11 *infra*.

anchorage. At last, on the 17th, he "disembarked Lieut. GRAY with the Marines upon Point Penagger—a low sandy point covered with wood—and employed them in clearing the ground." This ground is the present Esplanade, which with great foresight he reserved when so freely giving away all other lands. He took formal possession of the Island on the 11th* August.

The place was practically unoccupied; the only Malay inhabitants heard of were 52 Malays who came over, apparently from near Tanjong Tokong, to help in felling the forest.

Shortly afterwards an ancient clearing with coco-nuts, fruit trees and a burial-ground came to notice at Datoh Kramat; and in 1795 a grant of this clearing (measuring 13 orlongs) was given to Maharaja SETIA, on the express ground that he was a "relation by descent of the Datoh Kramat who cleared the ground 90 years before."

With these exceptions, the whole place was one great jungle.† Clearing went on with energy; wells were dug which yielded water that was fit to drink, but uninviting through being stained red by the roots of the penaga tree. Huts were run up for the marines and lascars, the tents which the settlers had brought not affording sufficient room. A month passed away quietly enough in the performance of these first labours, and the little party on the point was still unmolested by prying and undesirable intruders. But this was not to last long. Writing to Mr. ANDREW ROSS of Madras, Captain LIGHT says: "Before we could get up any defence we had visitors of all kinds, some for curiosity, some for gain, and some for plunder."

No Malay wearing a *kris* was at first allowed ashore, and care was taken to confine to their boats parties of those Achineses

* By a curious error this event came afterwards to be celebrated on the 12th August, and is so kept in Penang even now. It is easy to explain how the mistake occurred; the 12th August was the Prince Regent's birthday, after whom the Settlement was named. So far back as 1823, the 12th is given as the date of foundation in a minute on Land Administration by Mr. PHILLIPS, who came to Penang with Sir GEORGE LEITH in 1800.

† The island had been cleared by Kedah of its piratical inhabitants about 1750.

and other warlike spirits who were above using the *bliong* in the jungle. Captain LIGHT had seen too many ruins of the old factories which these gentry had "cut off" to trust them as settlers. To encourage the wood-cutters, he is said to have ingeniously loaded a gun with a bag of dollars and fired it into the jungle. It is mentioned also that the Malays provided *nibongs* for the stockade which was the precursor of Fort Cornwallis. On the 10th August, two of the Company's ships, the *Vansittart* and the *Valentine*, hove in sight, and Captain LIGHT, thinking the occasion a favourable one for the christening of the infant colony, invited the Captains ashore to assist in the ceremony on the 11th August. "At "noon," he tells us, "all the gentlemen assembled under the "flagstaff, and unitedly hoisted the flag, taking possession of "the island in the name of His Britannic Majesty and for the "use of the Honourable East India Company, the artillery "and ships firing a Royal salute, the marines three volleys." The following day being the birthday of the PRINCE OF WALES, it occurred to our founder to name the island in his honour; but this name has been unable to compete with the shorter one of native origin, and exists only in official documents. Once the establishment of the Settlement became known, people began to flock in from all quarters to live under the protection of the British flag.

His work progressed favourably, especially in the matter of health. The early entries in his Diary often express surprise at the absence of all serious sickness; until the following year. Then the dry season affected many, and struck him down with fever very severely in January, 1787. About the same time he began to feel the want of support from Calcutta. In February, 1787, he writes to Mr. A. ROSS, of Madras:—"I "have received nothing from the Bengal Government since my "departure from Calcutta." But the Settlement prospered and grew notwithstanding, the number of settlers being stated at "about 10,000" by the end of 1789, and at over 20,000 in 1795.*

* Of this number the Chinese were then not much over 3,000; and Captain LENNON, R. E., who visited Penang, in November, 1795, expressly states, That the *Chuliahs* were more numerous. (S. A. S. Journal, vol. 7.)

The task of governing this mixed multitude fell entirely on the shoulders of Captain LIGHT himself, for he received but little encouragement from the Indian Government, who long regarded the Establishment at Penang with doubts and even with jealousy. There had been a rival settlement formed at the Andamans in 1791, under the patronage of Admiral CORNWALLIS; but it never prospered, and in 1796, was abandoned. Meanwhile Penang had natural advantages which served it better than any patronage. The Superintendent, as he was called, lost no opportunity of assuring the East India Company of the success of his beloved Settlement as a commercial enterprise, and implored the Directors to establish a proper Government and to make provision for the administration of justice. This was a difficulty most keenly felt, but in spite of his earnest recommendation no proper remedy was applied. The sole tribunal up to the beginning of the 19th century was an informal kind of Court Martial, composed of Officers and respectable inhabitants. All the minor offences and petty disputes were adjudicated by the "Captains" or headmen of the various nationalities inhabiting the island; and there was no regularly organised judicial system in the island till the establishment of the Recorder's Court in 1805. In Captain LIGHT'S time persons convicted of murder were sent prisoners to Bengal; and by the express order of the Indian Government it was "made understood upon the island for the sake of example that they were to remain in slavery for life." This bugbear of slavery in Bengal was a childish subterfuge wherewith to maintain the majesty of the law; but LIGHT was no party to such folly; and continually urged his Government to provide proper Courts endowed with full authority.

Early in 1788, the financial question confronted the Superintendent of the new Colony. He was much averse to laying burdens on the people, and especially to interfering with the freedom of the port, and expresses his regret at the insistence of Government. In a despatch addressed to Lord CORNWALLIS, dated 20th June, 1788, he urges: "Some reasonable time should be allowed the first settlers to enable them to bear

“the expense of building, &c. I arrived here in July, 1786. “It is now almost two years, but the inhabitants have not “slept in their houses more than twelve months. I should “not have scrupled to give my word to them that they would “not be taxed in three years, but as the necessities of gov- “ernment will not admit of a delay, I offer the following “modes to your Lordship’s consideration.” He suggests twelve possible methods for raising revenue, including ground-rent on houses, shop-tax on retailers, a spirit farm, duties on alienation and succession, and import duties on foreign goods. The Government approved of these, but consented to postpone the evil day. Later on, however, in 1801, Penang became a “customs port;” and was not set free from this obstruction to its trade till 1826.

In 1789, Captain LIGHT went to Calcutta, and was closely questioned by the Government as to the capabilities of Penang. Thus challenged, he proved equal to the occasion, and eulogised his Settlement in a voluminous reply. He concludes a despatch by the following optimistic summary of such advantages as, he says, are visible and undeniable:—

“1. A harbour with good anchorage, secured from bad “weather and capable of containing any number of vessels.

“2. An island well watered, of excellent soil, capable of “sustaining 50,000 people and abounding in all necessary ma- “terials for their service and security.

“3. A port favourable to commerce, the present imports “amounting to upwards of \$600,000 per annum.

“4. A place of refuge for merchant ships where they may “refit and be supplied with provisions, wood and water, and “protected from the insults of enemies.

“5. An emporium centrally situated where the merchants “of all nations may conveniently meet and exchange their “commodities.”

LIGHT’S instincts were true; yet he failed to convince his Government, and for many years the life of Penang hung on a thread; indeed it was not till recently that revenue began to cover expenditure, and that our founder’s forecast was justified in this respect.

In 1790, LIGHT began to find that the duties of Superintendent of the growing Settlement were incompatible with his position as a merchant,* while the small salary (Rs. 1,000 per month) which he received from Government was insufficient to warrant his giving up trade. So strongly did he feel this that we find him proposing to the authorities in Calcutta that he should be precluded from engaging in trade, receiving "such increase of salary as will support the office with "decency and enable me to make a small provision for approaching old age." Few of his acts reveal an honourable and upright character more clearly than this. His combined position of Superintendent and principal merchant in Penang gave him abundant opportunity of enriching himself; and in those lax days, with examples like VANSITTART and MACPHERSON before him, such scruples must have seemed to many almost Quixotic. In the following year there was trouble with Kedah. The Raja of that country, grown jealous of the prosperous Settlement that had sprung up in his neighbourhood, collected a force, and in 1791 instigated a fleet of twenty Lagoon boats to enter Pry River. These were joined by the Kedah Bandahara. A land force also came down to the banks of the river and threw up entrenchments. LIGHT'S force numbered 400 men, all well armed and disciplined. He took the initiative and attacked by land and sea the force at Kuala Pry, which had swelled to the number of over 8,000 Malays. After a few hours fighting the enemy were dispersed, notwithstanding their great preponderance of numbers. Since that day Penang has remained free from the attack of any enemy, native or foreign, even when the Siamese troops of the PHYA LIGOR were over-running Kedah in 1821. LIGHT was justly proud of his victory and called his next son FRANCIS LANOON LIGHT in honour of it.

In a despatch dated 24th August, 1792, Captain LIGHT continues to sound the trumpet of his little Colony and to predict for it that success which it has since attained. One admires the earnest way in which its earliest ruler stood

† He was partner with JAMES SCOTT in SCOTT & Co., afterwards BROWN & Co.

forth as the champion of Penang. We have had other champions since, and ardent ones too, but must give FRANCIS LIGHT the palm. In the same despatch he alludes to the discovery of tin on Bukit Timah (the spur to the north of the "Crag" where the new Sanitarium of the Pulau Tikus College now stands), and the discovery of a wild nutmeg "whose fruit so nearly resembles a nutmeg that the Buggesses and a Dutchman who had been at the spice islands declared to be the real nutmeg." He goes on to say: "I have great hopes that the fruit may be improved so as to become an article of commerce." This prediction was verified, but not for some years after, till Mr. CHRISTOPHER SMITH'S Agricultural Mission in 1802; and then it was the imported nutmeg plant from Amboyna which for a time flourished so greatly in the island. The whole tone of Captain LIGHT'S letters bears testimony to the singleness of purpose and administrative insight that characterised this remarkable man, and it is matter for deep regret that he was not spared longer to bring his labours to full fruition. The use he made of his short period of power in the Far East, and his great capacity as a leader of pioneer enterprise, prove him a worthy forerunner to Sir STAMFORD RAFFLES, who founded Singapore, 35 years later, on very similar lines.

Captain LIGHT died at Penang, like so many of the early Chiefs of the Settlement, on the 21st October, 1794. Some fever like that severe one recorded in his Journal in February, 1787, probably caused his death; at any rate he was able to make a Will on the previous day.

A letter to Government published in Vol. V of Logan's Journal, p. 7, is the last official record of his work, bearing date 25th January, 1794. In this he pleaded that a Civil Assistant trained to the work might be his successor, "in case of his removal by death or otherwise," instead of the Officer Commanding as arranged in 1787. He also advocates "a mild and at the same time an active Government" as necessary for the "most wealthy and useful inhabitants"—that is, the Chinese, whose numbers he estimated at about 3,000.

He ends with the following characteristic paragraph:—"A regular form for administering justice is necessary, both for the peace and welfare of the society and for the honour of the nation who have granted them protection; it is likewise improper the Superintendent should have it in his power to exercise an arbitrary judgment upon persons and things; whether this judgment is iniquitous or not the mode is still arbitrary and disagreeable to society."

Under date August 1st, 1794, the Governor-General, Lord TEIGNMOUTH, replied that "he did not at present think himself authorised to establish formal and regular Courts," but passed, and transmitted to Captain LIGHT, certain Regulations for preserving the peace of the island. These long remained effective; and Mr. Justice DICKENS, on 22nd October, 1805, eleven years after, declared them to be the only laws even then in force. These Regulations must have reached Captain LIGHT just before his death, and the establishment of Mr. MANNINGTON as Magistrate with the first approach to regular law in his infant Settlement appropriately closes the public career of such a man. His chronicler—Colonel LOW—thus sums up his character and work:—

"Although the rather implicit credence which he gave at first to the Rajah of Kedah's assertion of his independence of Siam, might have led to more serious consequences than it did, still it would appear that he was a man of sound sense, probity and judgment—active, practical, and moderate. That certainly reprehensible credence, however, secured to the British merchant and to the world the port of Pinang, the most eligible one at this extremity of the Straits. (Vol. III of LOGAN'S Journal, 1848).

This seems to be a just and friendly reference as regards him personally. But in estimating the political criticism it must be remembered who it is that writes. Colonel LOW was an avowed partisan in the curious political controversy of his time regarding the status of Kedah. This matter bears so closely on Captain LIGHT'S principal works, and on his judgment and sincerity in carrying it out, that it must not be passed over in any account of his action as the Founder of the Settlement.

The old controversy upon the point has long subsided. As a matter of practical politics, the general "suzerainty" of Siam is now, and since the Malay Restoration in 1842, expressly admitted; but that in 1786 it was admitted, or even claimed, in any European sense of the word, "suzerainty," cannot be maintained. The view favouring Captain LIGHT'S direct negotiation with Kedah was supported by Mr. J. R. LOGAN, and was held by those best-informed in Straits affairs when the dispute arose. The opposite case, of which Colonel LOW, a Siamese scholar, made himself the chief exponent, is best disposed of by quoting his own admissions in his paper on the question in Vol. III of LOGAN'S Journal:—

P. 602. He admits that "no coercion or intimidation was "employed to obtain the cession of Penang in 1786."

P. 601. That the Rajah protested his independence, and was believed by the Government of India (after enquiries protracted during 1778–86); while "Siam would readily have consented" if consulted.

P. 613. That there was an "*ancient* dependence, and a rebellion against Siam *in 1720*," which shews the unpractical character of the claim, so many years after.

Pp. 603–13. In fact the triennial "*bunga mas*" remains the sole piece of evidence on which the whole figment has been constructed. The value of this evidence can be gauged by Colonel LOW'S own reference (p. 613) to "the rival nations of Ava and Siam" *both* receiving this token (see also p. 610 where the Rajah of Kedah claimed our help against *both* Burmese and Siamese). The *bunga mas* was no more than a token of inferior pretensions, offered by a second-rate to a first-rate Eastern Power, in the same way as it was formerly offered by Siam to China.

It is clear from many of these passages (pp. 600 to 609 and elsewhere) that Colonel LOW imported into his chronicle in LOGAN'S Journal questions which sixty-five years before had never been raised* at all, but which afterwards excited

* In 1802 the Advocate-General at Calcutta advised on the question whether the sovereignty of the Island had been ceded to Britain, and in the course of his formal "Opinion" the very existence of the Siamese is ignored.

much feeling in the controversy of his day. So also it must be confessed did Mr. Secretary ANDERSON and the partisans on the other side.

The unfairness of this as affecting Captain LIGHT'S action is obvious: especially because the strongest argument for his view of the independence of Kedah lay just in the fact that the question of dependence was never raised at all in the early days. In the later controversy, at a time when the Siamese invasion was pressing and the Dutch power had passed away from the Peninsula, it was forgotten that in the eighteenth century things were different. Far more important than Siam stood out the other factor in the question—the Dutch—who in 1783-5 were engaged in active hostilities* with Selangor and Rio. It is stated in ANDERSON'S "Considerations," (1824) on the authority of a letter from LIGHT to the Governor-General, that the Dutch in 1783 wrote to the Rajahs of Kedah and Tringganu for assistance, and fearing Dutch hostility when the Malacca siege was over, those Rajahs made in 1785 spontaneous offers of a British settlement in their respective States.

One thing is certain—that in writing his criticism in 1848, Colonel LOW was ignorant of Captain LIGHT'S despatch to Lord CORNWALLIS in 1787; and in consequence misrepresents the whole of the official negotiations respecting Salang and Penang as though these had turned upon "whether the islands formed a portion of the Siamese Empire." The printing of this despatch in a later volume of LOGAN'S Journal at once made it clear that nothing of that kind came into the question; its entire absence is in fact most noticeable. Captain LIGHT explained fully the whole of the circumstances of his selecting these islands in the official letter mentioned above, dated 18th June, 1787 (published in LOGAN, Vol. IV, p. 634). This letter shows that in 1780 WARREN HASTINGS' Council sanctioned "in a public letter" Captain LIGHT'S "plan for employing subscriptions," already actually raised for a Settlement on

*See S. A. S. Journal, Vol. XXIV, "Raja Haji's War."

Salang (Junk Ceylon); which was in course of being carried out when "before the troops and ships were made ready, the war with France in 1781-2 led to its being neglected."

The letter adds how, at the conclusion of the war, HASTINGS took the matter up again. "But for the death of a friendly Governor of Salang in December, 1785," Captain LIGHT—who had however in the meanwhile been struck by the superior advantages of Penang "as a barrier to the Dutch encroachment"—would, he says, "have taken both islands."

In the end, Sir J. MACPHERSON, HASTINGS' successor, "readily accepted Penang, but declined taking Salang" on the two grounds:—

(1)—that "it required a greater force" to keep;

(2)—that "as Government required a naval port with a port of commerce, Penang is more favourable than Salang."

There is no doubt that Captain LIGHT honestly believed it to be within the competence of the Rajah of Kedah to make over to the East India Company the island of Penang, and that nobody then questioned it. It is also certain that when his ships—the *Eliza*, the *Prince Henry* and the *Speedwell*—came to Penang, they went there with the Rajah's full consent and support, though after some opposition from the Laxamana and the Chiefs. Captain LIGHT'S Journal shews that the 11th, 12th and 13th July, 1786, were spent at Kedah "in embarking the people and provisions" for this expedition. There was nothing secret about it. Once arrived in Penang, he very wisely acted with a sole view to the success and safety of his young Settlement. His Diary describes the numerous risks incurred in such an undertaking, and shows how piracy, scanty provisions, disease, the hostility of the Dutch in Malacca, the jealousy of Kedah, had to be encountered in turn.

One story that has obtained currency perhaps deserves contradiction, for strange to say it is repeated in a Work like BALFOUR'S "Encyclopædia of India" (Vol. III), 1885, published by BERNHARD QUARITCH:—

"PENANG.—It was an uninhabited forest, when given by the King of Quedah to Captain Light in 1785, as the marriage portion of the King's daughter whom Captain

"Light married; but it was sold to the British by the King in 1800."

The statement about "the marriage portion" is of course unfounded. It has been repeated from old gossip* on this subject in a way that is as discreditable as the other obvious errors in the dates, &c. Captain LIGHT certainly allied himself in 1772 with MARTINA ROZELLS, but she was neither a Malay nor a Princess, but was apparently a Portuguese Christian of the Roman Catholic Mission at Kedah or Junk Ceylon. The old Junk Ceylon Mission removed about that time to Kedah, and in 1786 to Pulau Tikus village at Penang. She lived with him to his death, and inherited his house "Suffolk" and other property. She bore him five children, one of whom at least he took care to bring up in England†—Colonel WILLIAM LIGHT, born in 1784, died 1839. This son followed in his father's steps; for it was his pride to be the "Founder of Adelaide." As the companion and "Surveyor-General" of Sir J. HINDMARSH, first Governor of the new Colony of South Australia, he selected the site of the new Capital on December 28th, 1836.

The success of Captain LIGHT'S enterprise in establishing Penang was already clear at the time of his death. This is shown by Admiral CORNWALLIS' rival Settlement at the Andamans being abandoned two years later in favour of Penang. It is also testified to in the account of no less a personage than the great DUKE OF WELLINGTON (then Col. WELLESLEY) which is to be found, under date 1797, in Vol. I of GLEIG'S "Supplementary Despatches." Finally it was made manifest to all the world in the despatch of the Court of Directors on establishing the Presidency Government at Penang, in September, 1805. (Published in LOGAN'S Journal, Vol. V.)

* No doubt the story was honestly accepted and propagated by Colonel LIGHT, and his English friends, when having distinguished himself in the Peninsular War he became the Duke's confidential A.D.C.

† It appears from his Will that £2,000 was provided for this purpose. The other domestic facts are also gathered from it and from some Memoranda industriously collected by Mr. F. LIGHT, a direct descendant.

This despatch gives no mean tribute to Captain LIGHT'S work; and it deserves to be quoted at some length, for it explains with curious minuteness the policy of the East India Company during the first nineteen years of Penang history. It testifies that "from the spirit of British rule, "even when imperfectly administered, industry, enterprise "and improvement have appeared to a considerable extent on "the island, and its population, produce and commerce are "already very respectable." As regards the future, it adds: "The position of this island, its climate, its fertility, its "harbour, its produce of large timber, its contiguity to Pegu "which contains the most abundant of teak forests in Asia, "have long pointed it out as an acquisition of very great im- "portance in a commercial and political view, being situated "in a most favourable situation for an emporium of commerce "in the Eastern seas."

This important document, of 14 closely printed pages and 74 paragraphs, must have been framed in the latter part of 1804, just ten years after Captain LIGHT'S death. It is difficult to conceive a better testimony to his work and to the merits of his young Settlement. Among other things, it describes minutely how "no Import and Export duties were "imposed up to the time of the 2 per cent. *ad valorem* duty "levied in 1801, on the importation of tin, pepper and betel- "nut, which in that year produced \$13,076"; and also how "upon our first taking possession of the island..... "ground was said to be of such little value that to ask was "to have, or to appropriate was equivalent to legal right."

To check this some instructions had been invited and a Regulation had been passed on August 1st, 1794, "respecting grants of land for the period of 5 years"; and resolving that for the future "no grant of land be made to Europeans "exceeding in quantity 300 orlongs, preferring to encourage "the clearing and cultivation of the island by making small "grants of land to the industrious Chinese."

Unfortunately for this policy, the Chinese would not look at such short leases. The emergency thus created at the close of

his life brought out the resource and political courage which were the secret of Captain LIGHT'S success. This Regulation stopping perpetuity grants in favour of five-year leases was to take effect from 1st January, 1795. When the Resolution arrived he allowed it to be known and stopped issuing grants; but at the same time he informed Mr. YOUNG and others that he would not promulgate it, but would get it rescinded: "well knowing (says Mr. YOUNG) the publication would instantly stop all further advance," and especially the pepper-planting near Glugor which he had started in 1790 and had done so much to promote. Before the Resolution could come into force, he had died. But his immediate successor Mr. MANNINGTON took the same view; and on the 22nd August, 1796, "the Governor-General in Council rescinded his Resolution of the 1st August, 1794," *viz.*, that no allotments of land be made in perpetuity. (Papers relating to Land Revenue Administration, published 1884.)

It has since been contended that these Perpetuity Grants were a mistake; but the contemporary evidence points entirely the other way. In any case the blame would fall on his superiors. The responsibility for that policy lies with Sir J. MACPHERSON, who, when Captain LIGHT sounded him in April, 1786, before he started on his expedition, as to "granting settlers a portion of land," replied "That would be proper;" and with his successor, Lord CORNWALLIS, whose first despatch to Captain LIGHT dated 22nd January, 1787, stated: "We leave it to your discretion to receive such colonists as "you may think it safe and advisable to admit and to give each "family such portion of land as circumstances will allow and "you may judge expedient." To Lord CORNWALLIS' wise and liberal statesmanship on this and similar points the Settlement owes much of its rapid progress. His preference for "perpetuity settlement" may have carried him too far in an old country like Bengal. But in a new Colony it is the only policy that can succeed; as was soon made clear at Penang when he left, and when Lord TEIGNMOUTH endeavoured to reverse it and adopt restrictive measures.

In this matter as in so many others Captain LIGHT did his

duty well, as the local Chief, in saving the Government he served from making what would have been a very serious mistake. This was frankly admitted in paragraph 164 of Lord AUCKLAND'S well-known minute of 1837.

But this controversy belongs to a later chapter. The Founder's work was done, and it did not "follow him." He had been entirely successful in a kind of enterprise in which disastrous failure has been so common.

His "infant Port," once made a Presidency Government, lay very snugly under the shelter, not only of Penang Hill but of the "Honourable Court" itself. What the Treaty of Holland effected for the security of Singapore, the recognition given in 1805 by this new Commission of Government effected for Penang. Henceforth experiments could be tried without risking the very life of the Settlement. Some of them succeeded—like that of receiving Indian convicts, and like the "forward policy," which culminated in our occupying Java, and afterwards Singapore. Some of them failed—like the attempts to evacuate Malacca in 1808, and to federate with Acheen in 1811-18. Most of the experiments encountered, as usual, something both of failure and success. Among these may count the rage for nutmeg-planting, in 1802-20, and the Honourable Court's attempt to make Penang pay its way by Customs duties and otherwise.

No period of its history can better illustrate "the spirit of "British rule even when imperfectly administered" than that in which Captain LIGHT played his part alone. Those first eight years form a truly successful record of what British courage and perseverance, local experience amounting to adroitness, and a large-minded sense of public duty can achieve, even when almost unsupported. These qualities are shewn by the public records.

The inscription to his memory at St. George's Church by a contemporary Penang resident—ROBERT SCOTT—adds to the favourable impression made by the public records a warm testimony to his worth:—

IN MEMORY
OF
FRANCIS LIGHT ESQ.
WHO FIRST ESTABLISHED THIS ISLAND
AS AN ENGLISH SETTLEMENT,
AND WAS MANY YEARS GOVERNOR.
BORN IN THE COUNTY OF SUFFOLK IN ENGLAND,
AND DIED OCTOBER 21ST, 1794.

IN HIS CAPACITY AS GOVERNOR,
THE SETTLERS AND NATIVES WERE GREATLY ATTACHED TO HIM
AND BY HIS DEATH, HAD TO DEPLORE THE LOSS OF ONE
WHO WATCHED OVER THEIR INTERESTS AND
CARES AS A FATHER.

The best part of his life—from 1771 to 1794—had been given to this place, and he rests in our old Cemetery. His grave and the brief Inscription on it (the first four lines as printed above) are well kept. Next to him lies PHILIP DUNDAS, the first Presidency Governor; and within a few yards are the tombs of Captain SCOTT and Captain GLASS, his earliest fellow settlers.

It is only right that his successors should gratefully recall those who came first and bore the hard work of Pioneers; and should give special honour to so worthy a "Founder," upon the hundredth Anniversary of his Death.

A. M. S.

Penang, 21st October, 1894.



Skinner, A. M. 1895. "MEMOIR OF CAPTAIN FRANCIS LIGHT, WHO FOUNDED PENANG. [Died October 21st, 1794]." *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28, 1–17.

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