we read the cold commentaries of the Portuguese and the gossiping tolerant anecdotes of the Malay Annals we can feel that these three ministers were men of unusual character: the eldest, the Bendahara, calm, self-contained, temperate and cautious; the two younger men, passionate perhaps and hot-headed, but gifted with an energy and a persistence that is rare among men born under the sun of the equator. And Malacca needed them; for it was just when these three men were at the height of their authority that the town was startled by an unexpected and most ominous apparition—the first European fleet that ever sailed into its harbour. That was in August, 1509; the Admiral was the Portuguese, Diego Lopez de Sequeira.

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# *The Capture of Malacca, A.D. 1511.

BY

*The Hon'ble R. J. Wilkinson.*

In an age accustomed to the comfort of modern sea-travel it is not easy for a writer to convey more than a faint academic idea of the hard lot of the first-comers to the Eastern Seas: the leaky ships, the stifling cabins, the stale unpalatable food, the putrid water, the dirt, the overcrowding, the scurvy, the danger of storms, the discomfort of the steamy tropical calms, and the anxiety of approach to an uncharted and hostile coast. Yet if we are to take the measure of men like d'Almeida and d'Albuquerque we must try at least to realize the task that was set before them. Columbus and da Gama had been simple navigators who staked their lives upon their skill and upon the truth of their geographical beliefs. The first "Viceroys" were men of another type, men who dreamed dreams and saw visions of empire in the seemingly hopeless plan of pitting the small frail ships of Portugal against the untamed vastness of the Indian Ocean and against the teeming millions who inhabited its shores. D'Almeida was the apostle of Sea-Power. He saw that with all their apparent weakness his ships had at their mercy the commerce of whole continents; and he preached the doctrine of a supreme navy. Alfonso d'Albuquerque disagreed. He was a veteran and distinguished soldier, a man of authority, who believed in Sea-Power but not in its all-sufficiency. He mocked at the theory of an Eastern empire that owned no ports or docks and could not caulk a ship except by the favour of an ally. He was the apostle of the Naval Base, sea-power resting on the shore. Moreover, as a man of ancient lineage, cousin to Spanish kings, himself a knight of the Order of Christ, he would not take service under Francis d'Almeida.

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King Emmanuel put an end to the quarrel by naming both the disputants Viceroys and by giving each of them a fleet and a separate sphere of authority. This was in 1508. To another adventurous spirit, Diego Lopez de Sequeira, the King gave an independent command, a squadron that was to operate outside the waters of India and Africa and to bring new oceans under the sea-power of Portugal. These last were the ships that cast anchor at Malacca on that fateful Ist August, 1509.

As soon as the fleet was anchored a boat put off from the shore to ask in the name of the Bendahara who Sequeira was and why he came. Sequeira had brought an Arabic letter from King Emmanuel to the Sultan of Malacca; he asked permission to deliver it along with the gifts that went with such epistles. He was forced to wait. His arrival was an event of the first magnitude to Malacca; was it wise to begin relations of which no man could predict the end? So thought the Bendahara. The Sultan saw no harm in reading a letter and receiving gifts that committed him to nothing; he overruled his minister. A Portuguese named Teixeira was sent ashore and was conducted on an elephant to the palace, where he had the desired audience of the King. It is not difficult to picture the scene: the crowds outside who mobbed Teixeira in their inquisitiveness; and the silent staring faces that lined each side of the long palace-gangway up which an envoy was expected to make his way, with many halts and ceremonious bows at every few feet of the passage and every step of the dais. Teixeira was a stranger to Malay etiquette. He presented his letter with a sailor's jovial cordiality, and in a burst of further friendliness he fastened a necklace of beads round the neck of the Bendahara, just as though that minister was an African Chief who would glory in such tinsel. An angry murmur followed the Portuguese as he fumbled with the sacred person for the first noble in the country. "Let him alone: heed him not; he is only a mannerless boor", said the Bendahara. Teixeira's bold and blustering assurance was intensifying the nervousness, the fear of the Unknown, that chilled every heart in Malacca.

The days passed. No man dared attack the strangers; yet no man ventured to befriend them or trade with them, for who could foresee the end? The Indian merchants were anti-Portuguese to a man; they knew what trade-rivalry meant. The Bendahara saw that the strangers would be far less tolerant of oppression than the Indians whom they wished to supplant; in the interest of trade he preached a holy war against the infidel. The warriors of the city were discreet. They were to get the hard blows of the war, and the Bendahara the pickings of the trade; they elected to arm and wait. No one in fact wanted to fight. Sequeira had come for customers. He waited, hoping that the Malays would appreciate his pacific policy, but he could gain nothing by delay: it was the one thing that the Malays desired. Sequeira grew impatient, then petulant, then menacing; the monsoon was slipping by and he

could wait no more. Even at this stage, war was not what he wanted, nor did it suit the Malays. A situation of extreme delicacy is always fraught with dire peril; and in this case the accidental (or semi-accidental) firing of an alarm-gun on a Protuguese ship led to hostilities over some petty mistake. The fighting was half-hearted but it spread. The Malays on board the Portuguese ship jumped into the sea; such European sailors as happened to be on shore were seized and captured. Teixeira saw the error when too late. He was too weak to attack the sullen angry city that had now broken off all relations with him; the monsoon was dying away; his ships were sadly in need of repair; and in the end he had to sail home having tarnished the fame of his country and left his luckless comrades at the mercy of their foes.

According to Malay ideas the Bendahara was the leader of the resistance to Sequeira. He had done no fighting; indeed he had done nothing at all; but a statesman who achieves stupendous results by the simple process of inaction is a man who deserves better of his country than the hero of a hundred costly fights. So thought the people; so, doubtless, thought the Bendahara himself. The Sultan thought otherwise. He saw that "Uncle Mutahir" was becoming far too great a personage; and he recalled many old grievances against his minister. There was the avuncular wealth to be garnered; and there was that little matter of the Bendahara's daughter which had never been explained to His Highness's proper satisfaction. His Highness sent two of his followers to summon the Bendahara "to God's presence" as they politely put it. The Bendahara bowed his head and died. The men of his household died with him; his daughter was carried off to the harem of the Sultan; and his riches were dissipated in festivities at the wedding of the Sultan's daughter to the son of the Ruler of Pahang. Suddenly in the very midst of all this wassail the King's joy was turned into bewilderment by the unexpected reappearance of the Portuguese fleet—this time in overpowering strength under the Viceroy d'Albuquerque himself.

As soon as King Emmanuel had heard of the disaster to Sequeira he had sent (March, 1510) three ships under Diego Mendez de Vasconcellos to avenge the defeat. These ships sailed first to India to consult with d'Albuquerque. The great Viceroy was too expert a commander to weaken his forces by dispersing them into detachments; he detained Vasconcellos depending the complete subjugation af Goa and the organization of the naval base in India. Then when all was ready in the early Summer of 1511, d'Albuquerque sailed out to attack Malacca with every ship and soldier that he could muster. On the 1st July, 1511, he appeared in the roads with the entire force of Portuguese India,—nineteen ships, 800 European soldiers and 600 native sepoys,—with trumpets sounding banners waving, guns firing, and every demonstration that might be expected to create a panic among the junks in the harbour and the warriors in the town.

The effect was immediate. The ships in the harbour—Chinese junks and Gujerati trading-vessels—tried to sail away, but were intercepted and brought back to their moorings with every show of friendship. They then offered to join the Viceroy in the attack on the town, but this offer was declined with thanks; the Portuguese admiral could afford to bide his time. Meanwhile the Malays and the Sultan were too dumbfoundered to act; no boat put out from the shore, no message was sent. By the following morning, however, the Sultan, regaining some of his old assurance, sent a boat to greet d'Alduquerque and to say that the wicked Bendahara who had instigated the attack on Sequeira had been punished with death for all that he had done. D'Albuquerque replied, expressing his gratification, but pointing out that the Portuguese prisoners had not been released, and that pending their release the town must be regarded as accessory to the attack on Sequeira. The Sultan was now in a dilemma. He realized that he could not keep the prisoners without removing his mask of friendliness, nor could he release them without giving up his hostages for the security of the town. He tried the Bendahara's policy; he temporized. But d'Albuquerque was no Sequeira. He knew that any general attack would be the signal for the death of his fellow-countrymen; still, risk must always be taken. He entered into secret into secret communication with Ruy d'Aranjo who was the leader among the captives and his own personal friend. Ruy d'Aranjo spoke of divided counsels in the city, and advised attack. The Viceroy continued to feel his way. He seized some of the shipping and sent a few shots into the town. Then he waited. The hint was taken; Ruy d'Aranjo was released.

The Vicorey was now in a stronger position. He went on to ask for a heavy indemnity and for permission to open a permanent trading-station at Malacca. The Sultan demurred; he might have allowed the factory but he was quite unable to spare any money for the purpose of buying off the Portuguese. Meanwhile the war-party in the town was coming slowly to the front. It was headed by the Sultan's son Alaedin, by the Prince of Pahang, and by the young bloods of the place whe knew nothing of war and were eager for the fame that it brings. The Sultan himself preferred peace and quiet. He thought he could secure what he wanted by letting the Portuguese and the war-party oblige each other with the necessary quantum of fighting; as for himself he was a peaceful person who cared for none of these things. He told the Viceroy that he was poor and anxious for friendship, but quite unable to meet the demands that were being made upon him.

D'Albuquerque began now to prepare for war. He knew his own mind and had a definite policy: that of substituting a Portuguese for a Malay government and leaving the foreign traders undisturbed. He gave the Javanese and Indian leaders assurances to that effect and received their promise of neutrality in return. In the matter of local knowledge he was well served by the fact that Ruy d'Aranjo

and the other prisoners had spent two years in the town and had come to know the locality, the language, and the foreign merchants. Still the task before him was a hard one. In those days the channel of the Malacca River turned sharply to the right after reaching the sea and allowed ships to lie at anchor off the mudbanks on which the houses are now built. Disembarkation on those mudbanks was impossible; the key of the position was the landing-place at the mouth of the river and at the foot of St. Paul's Hill, but unfortunately for the Portuguese this point lay beyond the reach of the covering-fire of their ships' guns while it was exposed to the fire of every Malay stockade and building in the vicinity. The Viceroy tried to grapple with the difficulty by building a sort of armed raft or floating-battery which could float in shallow water and be moored at the mouth of the river so as to silence the Malay gun-fire and cover the landing of the troops. The battery was a failure. It grounded in the wrong place was exposed to a very heavy fire, and was only saved from capture by the heroism of its commander, Antonio d'Abreu who stuck to his post though wounded grievously. At last d'Albuquerque was compelled to attack without the help of any artillery to cover his advance; he sent out a strong force, cleared the landing-place of the enemy's troops by a sudden rush, and then forced up the floating-battery to a more commanding position where it made short work of the Malay defences. This advantage was not secured without heavy loss; for after the first surprise of the first Portuguese attack the Malays had rushed together from all quarters and had made a most desperate onslaught upon the landing party which they endeavoured to throw back into the sea. The prince Alaedin, mounted on an elephant, headed this charge in person; and the Portuguese lost 60 men before it was repulsed. This success and the destruction of the Malay defences encouraged the Portuguese to follow up their advantage by an attack upon the mosques and palaces on St. Paul's Hill, but the Malays were numerous and were fighting under cover while the Viceroy's troops were bewildered by the confused mass of building and were driven back with heavy loss. So ended the day. The Portuguese had cleared the landing-place; and that was all.

The crowning attack took place on St. James'Day, the 24th July, 1511. The Viceroy landed troops again under cover of the guns of his floating-battery but when once they had come ashore they were charged by a wild mob of 700 Malays and mercenaries under the Prince Alaedin in person. The fight was long and furious; and though it put the Portuguese to heavy loss it could only end in one way: armour, superior weapons, discipline,—everything was on their side. The Malays retreated once more to the shelter of the buildings that had served them so well on the previous day. This time d'Albuquerque advanced with more caution; he burnt the buildings as he went along. The work was slow and cruel, for the defenders shot down poisoned arrows upon

the attacking Portuguese, who were burdened with the weight of their armour, and exhausted by the heat of the sun and by the fire and smoke from the burning houses. Again and again, with diminishing forces, did the Prince Alaedin lead out his men in sudden rushes and win momentary success, only to be repulsed in the end. So too, now and again from the upper reaches of the river, did the Laksamana Hang Nadim send down his war-canoes or fireships to take the enemy in the rear or harass his communications—all to no avail. Night separated the combatants; and the Portuguese retreated to their ships, saddened by their heavy losses and by their consciousness that the work of destruction was only half accomplished.

On the following day the Viceroy disembarked his men once more and proceeded with every precaution to assail the smoking ruins that had covered the resistance of the last two days. He found no one to oppose him. Prince Alaedin and his Laksamana had retreated up the river and were awaiting attack at Pagoh on a battlefield of their own choosing. The Prince of Pahang had gone back to his own country as the fighting had lost all attraction for him. The Sultan had seen the burning of the palace and was not sure that his policy of lazy neutrality would justify him in meeting the Viceroy face to face; he removed himself with all possible despatch beyond the reach of any Portuguese marauding party. The aged bedridden Bendahara who had succeeded the murdered Mutahir was borne off in a litter by his loving relatives while he invoked curses on the cowardice of a generation that was not as the warriors of his youth. The Malay power was broken. The Javanese, Burmese and Indian merchants were for peace at any price and hastened to make their submission to the Viceroy, and, as an earnest of their goodwill, helped him to dislodge the Prince Alaedin from his chosen lair at Pagoh. The prince fled far away; a few scattered bands of outlaws represented all that was left of the famous Malay empire of Malacca.