

†

J.M.J.

Thaiping, Perak.ⁱ

Straits Settlements

25.1.84.

My dear Archer,

Your letter was very welcome as it was the only one from Australia that this mail brought me. Moreover it came just as I was recovering from a severe illness (my usual luck).

When I wrote to you I was on my way north. I went with the Governor in his yacht to Malacca, Penang and various other places too numerous to specify, but all as you may well imagine exceedingly interesting to me. He left me at Perak to visit some of the native states and I was to have gone on exploring but an exceptionally heavy rainy season stopped me.

Then the Governor thought I might as well see the rainy season out in Singapore so as he came down the Bernam Riverⁱⁱ he asked me to join him. This I did by going to Penang in a miserably small Chinese steamer with about 150 coolies on board but the English Engineer cleared the forecastle deck for me and I was pretty comfortable. I had better times from Penang to Singapore (40 hours) in a P. & O. mail boat.

I arrived 1/2 hour after the Govr. Two days after he got jungle fever and so did the ADC (that dreadful Bernam River) and as the private secy was away I was fortunately useful but had a dull Xmas - dining by myself in solemn state with 8 gorgeous peonsⁱⁱⁱ in red hat and sashes to wait on me. On New Years Day the Govr left in the Seabelle for a change. But lo! on the 3rd I was landed at Perak to continue my explorations and on the same day got fever.

From that day to this I have been an invalid. The fever turned to diarrhoea and then to dysentery and now I may say that I am fairly mending since I can sit up and write. As to my explorations the Dr. shakes his head and says that he thinks I must not stay too long in this country and I don't shake my head for my hand does all the shaking just now and would not mind if there was an old friend to shake it with. I begin to think that I am rather too far from Australia.

I can't say that I have done much in the main object of my journey. The paganism of the country is a huge load for anyone to try lift. All the officials here are so kind and so ready to advance my views that I think I shall be able to make some sort of provision for some orphanage and destitute asylum by which we could rescue many children and bring them up as Xtians.

The French missionary clergy are most disinterested and self-denying men living in the very poorest attap^{iv} houses on a mere pittance (£15 a month). They have Chinese and Hindu congregations, of course separate. Here the priest Fr. Margery has a congregation of 500 Chinese 200 Hindus and 50 so-called Portuguese but they are really Malays and speak little else. Fr. M. preaches every Sunday first in Chinese and then in Malay. He also invites me as he says to "make a speech" and when I do all the Europeans come Prot. and Catholic — black and tan and say they are pleased.

That was of course before the fever. The Church is too far away now. It is fully a mile and so close to the jungle that more than once the Pere has been obliged to fire from his window during the night at prowling tigers. Two months ago a cooley sleeping in one of his outbuildings was eaten and only his hand left to greet the horrified Pere in the morning.

I must close now. I am happy to say that I did not go down in the convulsion at Krakatoa. You should have known that I don't go into convulsions. Your remarks about the "memoires pour servir"^v amuse me. But seriously you know what my idea of this is.

I consider that the desire for publicity and to be known is the bane of most men who might do the world some service but for that. Hence the hollowness the unreality the mere "passing" of so many public shadows. So I don't want my life written but I should be happy to see what you said^{vi} of O'Shanassy^{vii} which never reached me. Send me one. I shall surely be here until April. Best love and blessing to Mrs. Archer and Gracie. Write soon and write long to the above address and I will keep you posted on my movements.

Yrs as ever

Fr. Julian

ⁱ . This letter was written on notepaper embossed — Governor Straits Settlement, Government House, Singapore.

ⁱⁱ The Bernam River forms the boundary between the States of Perak and Selangore.

ⁱⁱⁱ Peons — native attendants.

^{iv} Attap is the roof formed of the Nibong palm and is common through all the Archipelago and the Philippines.

^v "Memories to keep".

^{vi} W.R. Archer, "Sir John O'Shanassy; a sketch", Melbourne Review, 8, 1883 and Argus, 7th May, 1883.

^{vii} Sir John O'Shanassy (1818-1883), an Irishman who migrated to Melbourne in 1839, was three times Premier of Victoria. In the 1850s he championed the miners' cause and throughout his long public career he fought to retain state aid for religion and denominational education. He was created a Knight of the Order of St. Gregory the Great by Pope Pius IX in 1866 and K.C.M.G. in 1874. He supported Federation and as the leading Catholic layman of Melbourne for many years he endeavoured to lead his co-religionists (many of them Irish) away from the antagonisms of the old world by stressing that they were Australians. (A.D.B., Vol. 5, pp. 378-382)