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*General Editor:* JOHN BASTIN

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THE BRITISH SETTLEMENT  
OF PENANG

A  
DISSERTATION  
ON THE  
**SOIL & AGRICULTURE**  
OF THE BRITISH SETTLEMENT  
**OF PENANG,**  
OR  
**PRINCE OF WALES ISLAND,**  
IN THE STRAITS OF MALACCA;  
INCLUDING  
**PROVINCE WELLESLEY**  
ON THE MALAYAN PENINSULA.  
WITH BRIEF REFERENCES TO THE SETTLEMENTS OF  
**SINGAPORE & MALACCA,**  
AND ACCOMPANIED BY INCIDENTAL OBSERVATIONS ON VA-  
RIOUS SUBJECTS OF LOCAL INTEREST IN THESE STRAITS.

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BY  
CAPTAIN JAMES LOW,

OF THE MADRAS ARMY; IN CIVIL CHARGE OF PROVINCE WELLESLEY AND  
CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY OF  
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, AND MEMBER OF THE ASIA-  
TIC SOCIETY OF CALCUTTA.

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# THE BRITISH SETTLEMENT OF PENANG

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JAMES LOW

*With an introduction by*  
JAMES JACKSON

  
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## INTRODUCTION

JAMES LOW was born on 4 April 1791 in the parish of Kettle, Fifeshire, Scotland, the son of Alexander Low, 'Gentleman', and his wife Anne Thomson. After receiving a 'Mathematical and philosophical' education at the Edinburgh College, he joined the service of the East India Company as a Cadet at the age of twenty, having been nominated by Robert Thornton, one of the Company's Directors, on the recommendation of the Earl of Leven and Melville. In June 1812 he was commissioned as an Ensign in the 25th Madras Native Infantry and he was appointed to act as Adjutant to his Corps in May 1817. His promotion to the rank of Lieutenant in the 23rd Madras Native Infantry came in August of that year and three months later he was made a temporary Extra A.D.C. to Sir John Malcolm who was then actively engaged in military operations as a brigadier in the Deccan army. Like other well-known officers of the Madras army, notably Captain Henry Burney, after five years' military service in India Low was transferred to Penang and came under the orders of the Government of Prince of Wales Island with effect from 1 January 1818.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Most information on Low's early life is to be found in his Cadet Papers (L./MIL/9/125, ff.86-90) and in the Madras Army Service List (L./MIL/11/39, f.471) which were kindly made available by Mr. Ian A. Baxter of the India Office Records, London. Some additional details on his career were provided by Dr. G.E. Marrison, Deputy Keeper, Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts, British Museum. See also L. Stephen and S. Lee (eds.), *The Dictionary of National Biography*, London,