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THE
WAR IN MALAYA

by

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G.O.C. Malaya, 1941-1942

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Dedication

TO ALL THOSE BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN
WHO TOOK PART IN THE CAMPAIGNS IN MALAYA AND BORNEO
AND TO THOSE WHO WAITED AT HOME
FOR THEIR RETURN

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Foreword

THE fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942 was a great shock both to Britain and to her Allies. The shock was all the greater because the public generally had been led to believe that Singapore was impregnable. Accusations against our leaders, both military and civil, were made in our own country and abroad, and there were wild stories about the conduct of our fighting men and of the civil population. Many of the statements made and many of the opinions expressed were based on false or incomplete information. Some of them were founded on inadequate knowledge of Malayan conditions or of the factors which influenced decisions. Others were "last survivor" stories. I have hitherto made no effort to refute these accusations or to deny these stories. Some of my friends have wondered why. I felt that it would be better to concentrate on producing the true story and that it is due to all those who fought in Malaya and Borneo, and to the non-combatants who played their part and suffered equally with the fighting men, that I should record the knowledge which I alone possess. So that is why I have written this book.

It would have been easy for me, in the charged atmosphere which still surrounds the fall of Singapore, to have written a sensational story. It would have been equally easy to have written an apologia. I have tried to avoid both these pitfalls. I do not believe in apologies when there is no occasion for them and to descend to mere sensation would be to deprive the important events which took place in Malaya and Borneo both before and during the campaign of the serious study which they deserve. I have tried, therefore, in this book to give, as concisely as I can, a picture of those events as they are known to me and to explain why certain decisions were taken and the factors which influenced them. I have assumed that the great majority of my readers have little or no knowledge of the Far East, so I have tried to introduce them to the conditions which prevailed there at the time of which I write. I hope I have not been unsuccessful.

The preparation of a book like this five years after the events took place has naturally entailed a great deal of research. I have been fortunate to have access to such official records as reached