

STATEMENT OF THE SERVICES OF SIR STAMFORD RAFFLES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
JOHN BASTIN



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INTRODUCTION

RAFFLES'S *Statement* is one of the rarest and least known of his works. It was privately printed by Cox & Baylis of Great Queen Street, Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, in November 1824, and issued in blue paper wrappers and in boards with a red roan spine binding. The precise number of copies printed is unknown, but the work was sent to the Directors of the East India Company, officials at India House, and to members of the Board of Control. One may reasonably suppose that something like one hundred copies were dispersed through Company channels, and that another fifty copies were sent to members of the Government and persons of influence. Possibly another hundred copies were distributed among Raffles's friends and acquaintances, and the fact that six copies were sent to the Duchess of Somerset suggests that he was rather profligate in his distribution of the work. On the other hand, the present-day rarity of the work¹ indicates that the printing could not have been large and that 250 copies would be a generous estimation of the total.

Raffles's purpose in writing the *Statement* was to provide, in the event of his premature death, a record for his family and friends of his public career, as well as material for an appeal to the Directors of the East India Company for financial compensation for his family covering the loss of his possessions in the ship *Fame*. According to the opening sentence of the work, it was written during the homeward voyage from Benkulen aboard the *Mariner* between April and August 1824. But Raffles was so severely indisposed during the voyage that it is doubtful if he was able to confide to paper more than the barest outline of the subject.² Certainly its effective composition was not commenced until six weeks after his arrival in England when he was occupying 'a snug house' at number 2 Wellington Place, Cheltenham. By then he

¹ A copy sold at Sotheby's in London on 17 November 1969 (lot 176) is described in the sale catalogue as 'very rare'. The copy is inscribed on the title-page: *Wm. Evans from the author, Evans being the Baggage Warehousekeeper of the East India Company in London, and not the missionary referred to in Sotheby's catalogue.*

² Raffles had proposed to devote the hours between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. daily during the voyage to the task of writing 'an account of my administration in the East' (Lady Raffles, *Memoir* (London, 1830), 577).

had talked with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the East India Company, and with friends at India House, from whom he gained the impression that the feeling was generally in his favour and that before Christmas something would be done 'to acknowledge my past Services and remunerate me for my losses'.³

Raffles calculated his losses at between £20,000 and £30,000, and even before he commenced writing the *Statement* he submitted to the Company, on the advice of his agent, a short account of his claims. This, as he explained in a letter to the Duchess of Somerset, was in the hope that the Court of Directors 'may be induced for their credit and my quiet, to grant me such acknowledgement & compensation for my Services & hopes as the case may merit—but I own that I have not much faith in what they will do, and if they do not act handsomely I shall be inclined to carry the matter further—and I think it most likely that a final appeal will be made to the public at the General Court which will be held about Christmas—The fact is that I believe the Chairman who should take the lead in these matters has not sufficient weight in the Court to carry his proposals through & that the Court generally are afraid of the question coming before the Public, which it necessarily must do for confirmation when it will be next to impossible that Mr Hume or some strong oppositionist should not call them to account for their previous conduct—for myself I determined from the first to remain quiet & to allow them time to act as they thought best—but I shall be prepar'd to take another course if I experience any thing like neglect or injustice—till then I might but unnecessarily give trouble to my friends by availing myself of their influence—'⁴

Raffles was incapable of remaining inactive and only three or four days after writing that letter he decided to adopt the more direct method of appealing to the Directors of the East India Company by circulating a printed account of his public services. 'I have been engaged for the last two or three days in drawing out a brief review of my public administration during the last twelve years', he wrote to the Duchess of Somerset on 9 October 1824. 'After the loss of all my Documents and Records a Paper of this kind becomes the more interesting—I hope I shall not be found to have said too much in favor of my own Services and pretensions, and yet the Countries in which I have been placed have been so new untrodden and interesting, and the situations in which I have been thrown have been so peculiar and trying, that unless I

³ Raffles to the Revd. Dr. Thomas Raffles, 25 September 1824 (private collection).

⁴ Raffles to Duchess of Somerset, 2 October 1824 (MSS. Eur. D. 742/24, India Office Library and Records).

state them myself, few will either know or understand any thing about them. I mean to be prepared for a full exposé, and I feel confident that my course has been so straight forward that the more light may be thrown upon it, the more obvious it will appear and the more creditable it will be to my Character.⁵

Although the *Statement* was written in the most general terms Raffles found great difficulty in putting it together without reference to the papers which had been lost in the *Fame*. He sought to remedy the deficiency by soliciting materials from the archives of the Governors-General under whom he had served, but with little success.⁶ A week's concentrated writing brought on one of his severe headaches which was made worse by a bad cold, but he was able to complete the work by the third week of October. 'I finished the Paper I was writing some days ago & it is now at the Printers', he informed the Duchess of Somerset on 24 October. '[I]t is not exactly what I would have wished & the state of my health obliged me to contract it within very narrow limits and bring it to a conclusion rather suddenly & with less spirit than I could have wished—Such as it is, however, you shall have it in a few days—'⁷

⁵ MSS. Eur. D. 742/24 (India Office Library and Records). The Duchess replied two days later: 'I am very glad you have begun writing a brief review of your public administration for the past 12 years, thus partly restoring an account of what was so sadly destroyed—Do you know I meant to ask you to do this, but I thought it too early, so determined to wait till your health was re-established—& till time had a little obliterated the recollection of the sad fire—but your energy of Character & strength of mind is even greater than I (who know you so well) had thought—The destruction of all your labors wd have rendered most people heartless, but here are you already thinking of restoring the lost effort of years! What a pity such a Character was not sent out Governor General of India! How much good wd you have done, not only to India but to England—' (MSS. Eur. D. 742/27, India Office Library and Records).

⁶ The second Earl of Minto, son of Raffles's patron, replied to the request sympathetically, but there is no indication that Raffles received any papers from the first Earl's archive. The Marquis of Hastings, to whom Raffles had applied for some sort of public testimonial, was less helpful. Writing from Malta on 5 December 1824, he stated: 'You will not, I am sure, doubt the satisfaction I should have in bearing the fullest testimony to your Zeal & Exertions. The doing so, however, in general terms would appear irreconcilable to the Records which exhibit instances where the Indian Government, while I was at the head of it, had not approved some of your measures. On the strange terms existing between me & the India House, such an inconsistency would not fail to be taken up & distorted. At the same time, there would be singular awkwardness & apparent invidiousness did I state those points as exceptions. It would rejoice me to be serviceable in any way not involving this dilemma, tho' I fear that I have at present little influence capable of being so employed. The calamity you suffered would be a spur to that disposition were any necessary. Believe that I lamented it deeply, as being not less a Loss to Science than a cruel distress to you; a feeling which I am sure has been universal' (MSS. Eur. D. 742/3, India Office Library and Records).

⁷ MSS. Eur. D. 742/24 (India Office Library and Records).