

A KEY TO THE EAST

THE SINGAPORE NAVAL BASE

TO-DAY'S OPENING

From a Naval Correspondent

Singapore, which to-day is to be the scene of an impressive ceremony in the opening of the great new graving dock of the naval base, celebrated its centenary as a British colony 19 years ago; in those 19 years its character as a constituent of the British Empire and its importance therein have undergone a remarkable change.

The colony owed its foundation to the foresight, enthusiasm, and perseverance in the face of discouragement from his official superiors of Sir Stamford Raffles. During the Napoleonic Wars England took possession of and held the Dutch East Indian islands; not ostensibly as a conqueror but as trustee for the true Dutch interests against the usurper Napoleon. When the Napoleonic yoke was finally thrown off it became obligatory upon England to hand back to the Dutch their lawful possessions; and under the Treaty of Vienna, signed in 1814, Java was restored in 1816 and Malacca in 1818. Raffles, then Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen, saw clearly that complete Dutch ascendancy in Malaya and the Malacca Straits would spell strangulation to British trade in the archipelago and farther east. The mere possession of Penang would not suffice to open the door; it was essential to acquire a more advanced trading post before the Dutch absorbed all that there were.

But the East India Company, whose servant he was, were reluctant to provoke Dutch hostility by what they would certainly regard as encroachment on their preserves; and the officials of Penang were not enthusiastic about the establishment of a rival colony in their vicinity. It was only with difficulty that Raffles could obtain the authorization of the former or the cooperation of the latter. But he succeeded, and permission to establish a trading post on



the swampy, almost uninhabited island of Singapore was obtained on February 6, 1819, by a treaty with one of the claimants to the Malay Sultanate—in return for the Company's support of his claim—and with the Temenggong, the Malay Chief of Johore. Five years later the grant was enlarged into cession of the full sovereignty of the whole island with its adjacent waters and islets.

AGREEMENT WITH DUTCH