

# The Men Made History. The Women Make Headlines



THE RANEE

*The ammunition was not needed*

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began the "dynastic troubles" which have just brought the Brooke estate into the news and to an end.

When over 40 years old, Charles had visited England and picked upon a girl of 18 to perpetuate the dynasty. After losing her first three children in a cholera epidemic she gallantly produced the present rajah and his brothers to the man from whom she was by then—and no wonder—estranged. Their early life was passed in Britain in genteel poverty and only by the time Vyner reached Cambridge University was the Kingdom able to support them "like gentlemen." At this stage their mother, who had tragically sacrificed her own life for the dynasty, despaired of interesting them in their duty to posterity and the "royal" succession. Fortunately, however, she managed to introduce them into a choir containing 22 unattached females—and Sarawak was saved. The present Sir Charles (Vyner) had, however, to wait eight years for his wife. The courtship would have been shorter had not the cab broken down in which he and Sylvia (the present Ranee) were eloping, and she lost her nerve. Yes, certainly, "a somewhat odd family."

## An Old Family Custom

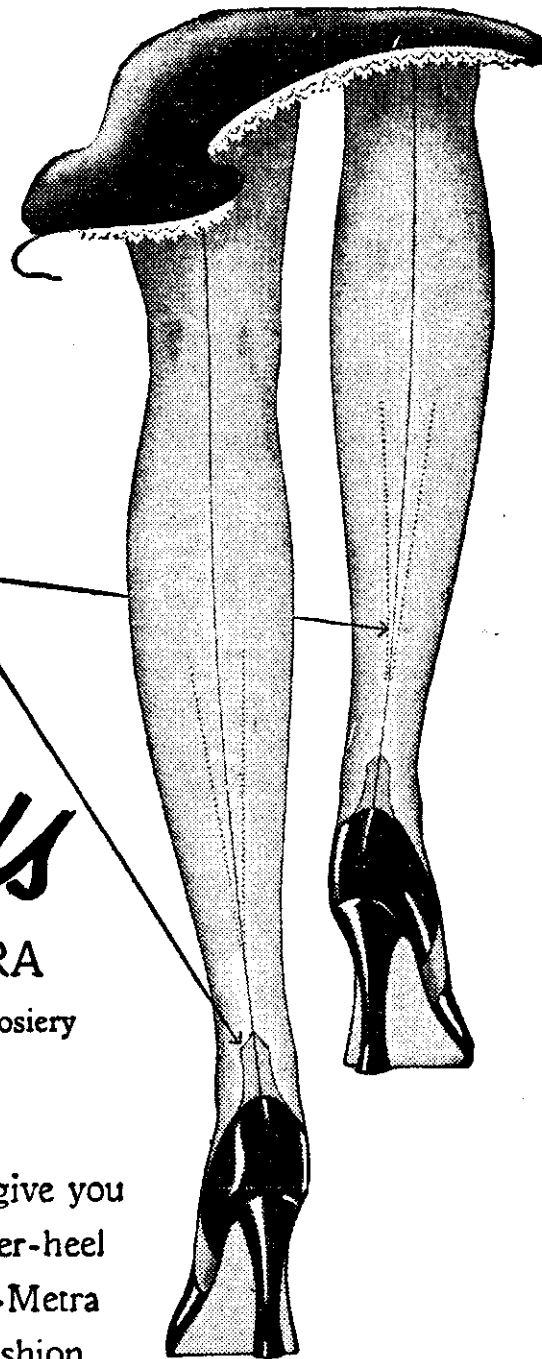
The disjointed nature of our cables about the current situation in Sarawak keeps it so obscure that one New Zealand paper has attributed a certain statement to the Rajah, another attributed the same statement to his brother, and a third fathered it upon Oliver Stanley. However, it seems clear that the Rajah, after appointing his brother Bertram (Adeh) as his successor, and then appointing Bertram's son, and then reappointing Bertram, has cut the Gordian knot by ceding Sarawak in toto to the British Crown.

These troubles over succession seem to be endemic in the Brooke family. Sir Charles, the second rajah, succeeded Sir James only because he happened to be assiduously on hand when Sir James became fed up with the other nephew whom he had been schooling for the post. Charles, also, had taken the precaution of changing his birth name of Johnston to Brooke. But he in turn was not merely bitterly disappointed, but actually humiliated on each occasion that his daughter-in-law produced yet another of her now "fabulous" daughters. For each time, in certainty of a son, he had had, for weeks beforehand, one hundred guns ready to fire off in his capital of Kuching. Later he became suddenly suspicious of Vyner himself and, without informing him, had Bertram declared *Tuan Muda* and a Council established to watch over his heir. Vyner, from the government offices over the river opposite the Palace, replied furiously by letter. And thereafter salvos of correspondence passed both ways, the physical commotion caused by each new broadside being anxiously watched across the stream by the opposing general's staff.

## In Spite of All This . . .

For all these extraordinary antics the effect of Brooke rule upon Sarawak (if not of ruling Sarawak upon the Brookes) seems to have been almost entirely satisfactory. A joint council of native chiefs and departmental officers has advised each rajah, though not until 1941 was representative government instituted. Suppression of private wars, and the absolute equality before the law of all sections and individuals in the country's complicated congeries of tribes and peoples were first aims and principles. Then as internal security was established, Charles and later Vyner turned to repulsing the new enemy that this condition attracted. "It is not my policy," declared Vyner to the Council Negri, "and it never was the policy of my predecessors, to increase the revenue of the State by inviting any influx of foreign capital. Development of the resources of the country must be as far as possible carried out by the people of Sarawak themselves."

This policy has, of course, kept Sarawak "backward"—in the sense that the natives work their own land and not in factories for outsiders. But their own agriculture progresses, the hospitals and schools of Christian missions flourish, and oil wells produce revenue. The Brookes, who have put on record that "the natives are not inferior to white men—only different," hold firmly that in this they are maintaining the first Rajah's Testament—"Sarawak belongs to the Malays, Dyaks, Kayans . . . and the other tribes, and not to us. It is for them that we labour, not for ourselves." But probably the dynasty has run its course and Crown government, with the local constitution maintained, may be the best for all parties. It was Bernard Shaw, apparently, who first suggested selling Sarawak—for £30,000,000, in 1913. Vyner Brooke, in contracting out to-day for one million, is probably (like Robert Clive) still "aghast at his own moderation."



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## 'I was a little hoarse in Church'

— but that was soon put right by those pellets of medicated Liquorice

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