

Letter from Sir Stamford Raffles to Sir Everard Home

Received the keg containing the elephant's head, July 6th 1822

Bencoolen 13th Aug 1821

My dear Sir Everard,

In compliance with your request I now send you the head of a young Sumatran elephant. The animal was not above six weeks or two months old and a male. I was half tempted to send the whole trunk but it was so thirsty that I grudged the liquor. I have left the flesh on the head conceiving that you might like to dissect it.

Notwithstanding your determination to include Babi Rousa [Babirusa] among the Sumatran animals, I must again assure you that I firmly believe there is no such animal on this island – neither is there in Java – and I am pretty sure it is confined to the Celebes and the Molucca Islands. So low does my interest stand with the Dutch that I have not been yet able to procure a specimen from them and I am almost inclined to make a voyage there on purpose.

I can make out nothing respecting the Toredos – pray give me information respecting it – I for a long time took it to be what the natives call lalang laut or sea grass, but I have lately found this and it is evidently a coralline. My abstract of the Transactions only comes down to 1800 and I have only the later numbers since – I can find no mention of Griffiths paper, send it to me if you can that I may clear up the subject as there still remains a profound ignorance of everything of the kind on the spot. I have added a few more new animals to my former list which I shall send by the first opportunity.

We have been lately engaged in geographical and geological pursuits and Dr. Jack is now drawing out the result of our enquiries and our collection in this department – they are interesting as so little is known of Sumatra and it is proposed to send the paper to Mr. Colebrooke for publication in the Geological transactions – as it will not be a very dry paper I may perhaps recommend it to your perusal.

He sends by the present opportunity some interesting botanical collections for the Linnaean – I have not been well lately I have laboured under severe domestic affliction but I shall not relax, and as much shall be done in the short time left as possible.

_____ yours

[Raffles' signature]