

*PALEMBANG and the ISLAND of BANCA.*

The following statement, apparently proceeding from authority, was inserted in the *Courier* of last night:—

“In former times, the Sultan of Palembang, like all the other native Princes in those quarters, was subject and tributary to the Dutch Government. He paid this tribute in pepper, tin, &c., and the Dutch had a fort and garrison, with a civil jurisdiction, at Palembang.

“In 1812, the local British Authorities in Java, for reasons best known to themselves, dethroned the then reigning Sultan, and put his brother in his place, with whom they made a treaty, by which the island of Banca was ceded.

“In 1813, Mr. Robinson, the then British Resident, concluded another treaty, by virtue of which the new Sultan was in his turn deposed, and his brother (the same who had been before deprived of his authority) was again raised to the Throne, and reinstated in his former dignity.

“This proceeding was, however, disapproved of by the superior British authority, and things were replaced nearly upon the same footing as in 1812.

“The treaty of 1814, between the British and Netherland Governments, stipulates (Art. 1.) that all the factories and establishments which had been possessed by Holland on the 1st of January, 1803, should be restored to the King (then Prince Sovereign) of the Netherlands. Palembang was one of those establishments.

“By the second article of the same treaty, the Island of Banca was ceded, in full sovereignty, to the Netherlands, in exchange for the settlement of Cochin and its dependencies, on the coast of Malabar.

“Palembang, therefore, under this treaty, was comprised in the other Dutch factories and establishments thus restored, whilst Banca was considered by itself; a point of view which does not appear to have been absolutely just, as this island formerly supplied the tin which the Sultan of Palembang was (by treaty) bound to furnish to the Dutch, and which exceeded in quantity (as fixed by that treaty) the present produce of that island.

“It is perfectly true, that when the agents of the British Government transferred the Government of Java to the Netherland Commissioners, they called upon them to fulfil the engagements which the British agents, during their administration of Java, had contracted with the native Princes. The British authorities attached this condition to the surrender of Banca, which surrender they declared ought to be considered as not having taken place, if the treaties with the Sultan of Palembang were not confirmed. But it is equally true, that the Netherland Commissioners most decidedly and positively refused to accede to that condition, and for this very simple reason—that the treaty of 1814 was *positive* and *unconditional*, and that it would have exceeded their powers, as a delegated authority, to have added any one stipulation whatsoever to the contents of the treaty, of which they were not the contracting parties, but only the executors.

“The British agents protested against this mode of reasoning; but as such a protest could not give a right which did not previously exist, the Netherland Commissioners did not allow themselves to be in any manner influenced by it.

“It is, moreover, evident that this protest, or rather the reasoning upon which it is founded, would have gone to render nugatory the exchange of Banca against Cochin, stipulated by the treaty of 1814; for, if the cession of Banca was to be void unless the British treaties with the Sultan of Palembang were ratified, this condition not being fulfilled on the part of the Dutch authorities, must have annulled the whole tenour of the article respecting the exchange of Banca against Cochin, and both possessions must have reverted to their original owners.

“But the fact is, that the settlement of Palembang partook of the nature of all the others that were to be restored to their former possessors of the year 1803; and the moment the Netherland Government was replaced in the possession of it, all its former rights revived. Consequently, no one has any right to interfere with its measures respecting that settlement.

“It is therefore impossible to understand, upon what principle the Sultan of Palembang can be considered as an independent Prince, being under the immediate protection of the British Government.

“By the retrocession of Palembang, the British Government have renounced all claim to interfere in its concerns; and any right they might have had to do so, under intermediate engagements, can only apply now to the Netherland Government, to whom that settlement has been restored.

“In a contrary supposition, the argument made use of by the British agents would extend to all the former Dutch settlements, particularly in the island of Java; the natural consequence of which would be, that the Netherland Government would hold their settlements in India by a precarious tenure, entirely dependent on the pleasure of the delegated British Authorities in the neighbourhood, who would be thus entitled, not only to sit in judgment over every act of the Netherland Government in India, but even to interfere, *vi et armis*, as has been done in this instance at Palembang.

“It is hardly necessary to point out the consequences which would result from such a state of things, and which would evidently tend to endanger the good understanding so happily subsisting between the two countries in Europe.

“With respect to the late occurrences at Palembang, to the actual state of things there, the following is an accurate statement of facts:—

“In consequence of the dispute between the two brothers above-mentioned, each aspiring to the sovereignty, the inhabitants of that petty kingdom were most miserable themselves, and their contentions were a constant subject of alarm to their neighbours. The younger brother occupied the throne, when Mr. Muntinghe, the Netherland Commissioner, was sent to Palembang. Utterly incapable of governing the country, he was distinguished only by excessive cruelty, which manifested itself in the shocking punishments he inflicted, and by his toleration of the Malay pirates, who carried on in those seas a regularly organized trade in slaves, of the profit of which the Sultan partook. When Mr. Muntinghe first arrived, he was hailed by the natives as their deliverer, and their defection from the Sultan enabled him to conclude, on the 20th of June last, a treaty, both with him and with the Pretender, by which their authority was limited to a certain number of districts; whilst this treaty entirely abolishes the trade in slaves, restores the inhabitants to their industrious pursuits, and puts an end to the horrible system of punishments formerly introduced. It was after these arrangements had begun to operate, that three Envoys from Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles arrived at Palembang, under an armed escort, and caused the British flag to be hoisted on the palace. Mr. Muntinghe communicated to them the treaty which had been entered into some days before, representing to them with great civility, but at the same time with much earnestness, that neither under the recent circumstances which had taken place, nor under the old convention, had they any right to interfere. After some discussion the British flag disappeared, and Sir Thomas Raffles' envoys accepted the safeguard which had been offered to them, and which, in fact, was rendered necessary by the situation the country at that time stood in. They are since arrived at Batavia, whilst Mr. Muntinghe writes, under date of the 10th July, that he had taken the necessary measures to stop, on their march across the mountains, and to cause, if possible, to retrograde, a detachment of some hundreds of Sepoys and Malays, sent by Lieutenant-Governor Raffles from Bencoolen to Palembang, in order to give support to the operations of his agents there. In every thing that has passed, Mr. Muntinghe, the Netherland Commissioner, has acted with the greatest propriety and respect towards the agents of an allied and friendly Power, and has manifested that skill and wisdom for which he is eminently distinguished.”