

AFFAIRS OF QUEDAH.—The only dark spot in the annals of the British government in the Straits of Malacca, in its relations with the surrounding states, has been stamped on them by our conduct in regard to Quedah. With this single exception the course of our policy towards the Malayan States, since the first establishment of our authority in Prince of Wales Island, has been uniformly generous and liberal. It is worthy of note, too, that even in the case of Quedah to none of the Strait's Administrations is the conduct which we deprecate in any one particular imputable. It was the work of Lord AMHERST's chosen ambassador to the king of Siam to transfer Quedah to the arbitrary domination of that power, in the face of a treaty between our government and its reigning prince, in which its independence was recognised in the most solemn manner. Mr. FULLARTON, during whose administration it occurred, condemned the transaction in the strongest language,—and in all probability remonstrated with the Bengal government against an act of such flagrant injustice, which had not one single political recommendation of any kind to redeem it from the general execration with which it was always mentioned. In those compulsory unions of state with state, dissimilar in language, habits and institutions—the one weak and the other powerful—which have so often been made the reproach of the far famed Holy Alliance, there is nothing in its kind more truculently despotic, than the annexation by British power of Quedah to Siam. Had it taken place in Europe, it would no doubt have awakened the same indignant eloquence which was launched in the British Senate against the betrayers of Parga. But its very name and existence as a state are there in all probability alike unknown, and the voices of the humble advocates of its cause in this part of the world are too weak to “roll across the Atlantic.”

Within the last eight years the present is the second insurrection that has broken out among the Quedans for the recovery of their independence and, as on the former occasion, a British ship of war, to which we suppose the steamer will shortly be added, is at present engaged in blockading the coast of the devoted territory, conformably it is pretended to the provisions of Captain BURNES's treaty with “the magnificent king”; which stipulates that we are “not to permit the former governor of Quedah, or any of his followers to attack, disturb or in any manner injure the territory of Quedah.” The supreme government in its avidity to comply with these requisitions of the treaty goes at once to war with Quedah; & the blustering precipitancy with which it thus proceeds to quell the efforts of the humble and despised foe of an ally, presents certainly a somewhat singular contrast with the measured progress of its advance to repel the aggressions or resent the insults of the more formidable Tharrawaddy. It is possible, indeed, that the same ignorant apprehensions of a union of the Burmese and Siamese, in the event of a war with Ava, which it is understood led to Captain BURNES's embassy and treaty, may not at the present moment be without their influence in hastening measures against Quedah to keep the Siamese in good humour with us*. The government of Bengal may rest assured that the Siamese hold us too much in awe ever to dream of an alliance with Ava against us, even should we deprive them of Quedah, and supposing that the well known jealousies and lasting antipathies of the two nations rendered such a junction at all probable—and we feel confident that it would require nothing more than an earnest remonstrance with their government to induce them to part with Quedah on terms which would for the future secure the undisturbed tranquillity of that province, and relieve it from the state of odious oppression under which it labours. It is inconceivable to us how the supreme government instead of at once directing summary measures against the Quedans for endeavouring to throw off a yoke which they detest, and to which we bore so large a share in subjecting them, should never think of having recourse to measures of a more permanent and a more pacific tendency than a blockade of the Quedah Coast every seven or eight years, for it cannot be supposed that the dispersion of the insurgent force which now holds possession of the province will prevent future and oft repeated attempts of the same kind.

There is no presumption more to the discredit of the British government in India than that it does not possess the means of settling

the affairs of Quedah save by the use of arms, and every motive of policy as well as of humanity calls for the exercise of other means. Under the policy we at present pursue in regard to it, that province must continue in the most unsettled and desolate condition, a set of tyrannical masters and fierce bands of insurgents alternately succeeding each other in authority. Under the former, the industry of the inhabitants can never thrive, and the latter as soon as they get possession, make plunder and devastation their chief business that the enemy may find nothing left should they in their turn prove victorious—while that taste for predatory pursuits which characterises in some measure all Malays, is sure to attract adventurers from the neighbouring coasts to a scene so well fitted for their operations, and thus become the means of extending and reviving habits which we have of late been taking some pains to

extinguish. In short, if Quedah is to be continued a province of Siam, we must look to its being the rallying point not only of the disaffected natives of the territory—and those who sympathise in their feelings of enmity to Siam, but for all the desperadoes of the coasts of the Peninsula, from one end to the other, as well as from the Eastern Coast of Sumatra. Events prove that this is not likely to be less the case when the present ex-king dies, which in the ordinary course of nature must shortly happen—and it must be remembered that with respect to his heirs or successors we shall be without the pretext of any treaty to compel them to fix their residence where our government may appoint, or to drag them by force of arms from one of their own choice. There is no provision of the Treaty of 1825 which extends beyond the life of the ex-king—“the former governor of Quedah,” as he is there styled,

although we treated with his immediate predecessor for the cession of Penang, as “his majesty of Purlis and Quedah,” and on his own accession recognised his right to the same titles and dignities—nor is there any stipulation which binds the British government “not to permit” his successors from endeavouring to regain their independence. Unless therefore our government is prepared to consummate its former perfidy to the king of Quedah by some fresh act of injustice to his descendants, there is, in this view of the case, an additional motive for causing the independence of Quedah to be recognised by Siam. To that power its possession can be an object of no real value, and the recognition of its independence can bring no loss of revenue—which under their barbarous rule, and the expences of maintaining some force for the protection of the province, never we suppose amounted to the value of the *bungamas* or gold flower which was the only mark of homage or fealty ever before exacted from its former sovereigns by the king of Siam, but which was no more a symbol of national dependency, than the annual offering of a similar kind which the king of Siam himself makes to the Emperor of China. Let it be the object of our government to incline the king of Siam to peace, instead of setting him the example of being the first to move in a question in which he is himself the principal—and to induce him to exchange the barren advantages accruing from the possession of Quedah, for the not more empty privilege of annually receiving a gold flower in token of his being the “magnificent king.” His coffers we should think are much more likely to be filled even by that alternative, than by persisting in his present course against Quedah.

* It is rather a singular fact that one of the first and chief causes of the Siamese pretensions to the arbitrary dominion over Quedah, originated in the latter state being suspected of sending supplies of Provision to the Burmans when at war with Siam.