

PENANG AFFAIRS.

*A Narrative of the late Nanning Expedition, containing a Simple Detail of the Operations of the Troops, from 6th to 25th August 1831.*

BY AN OFFICER OF THE EXPEDITION.  
"Per varios casus; per tot discrimina rerum."

Virgil.  
"He told of hair-breadth 'scapes  
Of moving accidents by flood and field."

M A L A C C A :  
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"Much misapprehension appearing to exist in the Public mind, both with respect to the Political events which led to the late Military Operations, against Nanning, and the nature also of those Operations, we deem it right to refute the Reports in Circulation (many of which are of so ridiculous a nature and so garbled by a host of fabrications built upon a grain or two of truth as to confuse instead of enlightening) by a plain detail of the affair without exaggerating or extenuating any thing.

Before entering on the Military Operations, it will be necessary to review the ground upon which the war was undertaken, more especially as no epithet has been thought too strong to be applied in a Public paper to those Servants who were charged with the execution of the orders of the Court of Directors.

We should be sorry to impute these gross aspersions to wilful misapprehension, but the author of them is, in our opinion, nearly as culpable for giving to the world as facts false assumptions of his own, without in the first place ascertaining the truth of his premises.

The District of Nanning lies about due N. East from the Town of Malacca; and the residence of the Panghooloo is at a small place called Tabo, about 23 miles from Malacca, so insignificant as not to be deserving even of the name of a village. It consists in fact of three or four houses in addition to that of the Chieftain.

Nanning was subject to the Dutch sway; and when that Power delivered over Malacca to the British in 1825, in exchange for Bencoolen, it was included as being an integral part of the territory.

In fact the Panghooloo himself has never disputed the point, and even to this day, whilst in arms against us, he signs his letters to Government with the Company's Seal.

On account of the poverty of the Country, the tenth of the produce which has been always levied on the rest of the British Possessions, was commuted with respect to Nanning for 400 gautams of Rice and 4 dozens of Fowls annually, until such time as the improved cultivation of the Country rendered the levying of the Tax an easy matter without distressing the Inhabitants.

It appeared to Mr. Fullerton, then Governor in the Straits, that this period had arrived in 1828, but the Panghooloo, too long accustomed to an easier rate, resisted the demand. An expedition, similar to the late one, was accordingly prepared at Malacca, but when on the eve of departure, Mr. Fullerton, fearful of the result of his engaging in war without the sanction of superior authority, countermanded it, and referred the matter to Bengal. His Lordship, equally unwilling to incur the responsibility, laid the business, with all Mr. Fullerton's minutes before the Court of Directors.

It is not exactly in our province to criticize, or question the wisdom of great men and measures, but we may here remark that this indecision has been productive of many disastrous consequences. If Mr. Fullerton conceived himself justified in resorting to compulsory measures in order to enforce the Tax, and had virtually declared war upon the Panghooloo of Nanning by equipping a force against him on his own responsibility, he ought, in our opinion, consistently with the honor of the British nation, to have proceeded with the business on that responsibility, no new features in the case having arisen. If, on the other hand, his powers were not of so unlimited a nature, as to enable him to make war without the sanction of the Supreme Government, he ought never to have declared it. By so doing, and then abandoning his intention, he shook the remaining portion of the Panghooloo's allegiance to its very centre, first inspired the Malays with an idea, that the British, whom they had been taught to fear as a powerful nation, were themselves afraid of a pretty prince, and, from the interval of two years which has elapsed between this declaration of War, and the arrival of the Company's decision, upon which the late expedition has acted, afforded time for that powerful coalition of independent princes in the interior, by which the Troops in question were opposed."