

SIAMESE CONQUESTS.

(From the *Singapore Chronicle* of May 31.)

We learn by a late arrival from the east coast of the peninsula, that the Siamese, having marched a large army into Patani, have repossessed themselves of that country, with little or no opposition on the part of the inhabitants. Many thousands of them, it is stated, had previously fled from the face of approaching destruction into the neighbouring states of Calantan and Tringanu, the population being utterly unable to withstand the overwhelming herds of barbarian slaves which the King of Siam literally drives forward into the peninsula in order to wreak his vengeance on those who were principally engaged in the late insurrection on the east coast. The whole population of Patani is supposed not to exceed 50,000 souls, while the Siamese force now in that country is said to be 300,000 strong—an amount by no means improbable, when we consider that the population of Siam itself is estimated at 6,000,000, of which about one-sixth may be Chinese.

So soon as matters are settled at Patani, which, we doubt not, will be accomplished by most speedy and summary methods, peculiar to the Siamese, such as impaling, roasting, boiling, and pounding the unfortunate wretches who have been most obnoxious to their magnanimous chiefs and leaders, we are informed the Siamese fully intend proceeding to Calantan, which is but a few days' journey south of Patani, over a level and well-cultivated country, and subduing it in a similar manner. Tringanu will next occupy their attention, the access to that state being equally easy and short, and were it not that some difficult mountains and rivers intervene, Pahang would shortly after undergo a similar visitation from the Siamese.

The late insurrection, which appears to have been chiefly confined to Patani, was caused, we understand, solely by the inability of the inhabitants to endure the heavy exactions of the Siamese Government, the principal of which is a poll-tax of 10 dollars a-year on every individual. Such a severe tax being no longer tolerable in a country comparatively poor, we are by no means surprised the inhabitants should "kick against the goads," and endeavour to shake off a yoke so very oppressive to them, though they must have been aware, from their knowledge of the power of Siam, and their experience of Siamese cruelty, that their efforts in the cause of liberty must be attended with eventual failure, and sure destruction to themselves. The Malays say, however, that as the latter is sure to come on them, whether they submit to exaction or rise to oppose it (Seylla and Charibdis-like), they would rather hasten its approach by resorting to violent measures than retard it by dying patiently under the weight of tyranny.

There are some who suppose that the British authorities in this part of the world have secretly urged the Siamese King, by means of the Rajah of Ligor, to perpetrate these invasions, in order to divert the attention of the Malays on the east coast from joining the Panghooloo of Nanning in his warfare against the English. This surmise, we sincerely trust, is not true, as we do not conceive our Government would act so mean and so dishonourable a part as literally to urge the ruin of a few weak states, which are only supposed to be unfriendly, in order to save itself from threatened destruction.

We have made many inquiries amongst those who have been lately on the east coast, relative to the supposed assistance which the people of Pahang and Tringanu are said to afford the Nanning Chief; but the answers invariably have been, that the Malays on that coast take very little interest in the contest, and being well aware that the English always possess the power of punishing them by sea, the chiefs of these places have been heard to say that they were not so mad as to join in a warfare against the English. They assert that the Nanningites derive their whole support from the western states, most probably Salungore and Rumbow, from which countries supplies arrive at Nanning much more readily than they possibly can from the eastern ones.

So far are the Malays of the east coast from assisting the Nanning Chief, that we are told by a respectable witness that the Rajahs of Calantan and Tringanu, and we believe Pahang, think seriously of placing themselves under the protection of the English, in order to save themselves from the dreadful effects of Siamese cruelty and oppression. These states, Pahang especially, may, with as much justice as Siam has to show, be claimed by Johore, which principality is professedly under the protection of the British. In a commercial point of view, also, the Government should not allow these states to fall under the complete sway of Siam, as the trade carried on between this and the ports of Calantan, Tringanu, and Pahang, which, on reference to the last official statement of the trade of Singapore, published in December last, will be found to be very important, and considerably on the increase, must gradually dwindle into insignificance, through the heavy duties which the Siamese will impose upon the imports and exports of those places, and thus one great source of our trade will be dried up.

This should be seriously considered by our rulers, and if the above chiefs do actually supplicate for assistance or mediation, we hope no selfish policy, no base submission to grovelling expediency, as in the disgraceful case of Quedah, will intervene to give over a brave and hitherto friendly and admiring people, into the relentless clutches of a race of semi-barbarous beings, whose tender mercies are the cruellest of the cruel.

We have been told by a respectable eye-witness, an European, who visited the fort of Quedah shortly after the Siamese had repossessed themselves of it, solely by starving out its defenders, that these brave conquerors, not content with butchering the helpless and infirm, and treating their dead bodies in many instances in a barbarous manner, must needs wreak their savage vengeance on the graves of those who had died through want and disease during the siege, by digging up the dead bodies and casting them into the river. Our informant said that a neat bazaar formerly stood in the middle of the fort, but it had been destroyed, and the whole place presented the horrifying spectacle of "a valley of bones." The state of the neighbouring country we need not describe, as we have done so already; suffice it to say, it was miserable and destitute in the extreme.

With such a despicable people, who are capable of such inhuman barbarities, have we made a treaty of alliance and friendship, forsooth, apparently for the sole purpose of checking the ambition of the Burmese; and to such monsters have we sacrificed, on the altar of expediency (irrecoverably, we fear), the welfare, the prosperity, and the esteem, of a hitherto peaceable and well-disposed people. It is time to awake from this dream of darkness and delusion (if not already too late), and endeavour to remedy evils which we have been so very instrumental in producing. When confidence is once established with the Malays, they are firm friends; but when it is broken, they prove dark and dangerous enemies.