

### THE EX-KING OF QUEDAH.

The ex-King of Quedah is now once more a prisoner in the hands of the British Government. He has been assailed in his place of abode in an independent territory, his follow-

ers and dependants slain or dispersed, himself dragged away by violence, and conveyed in close custody to Penang. He is there not permitted to land, is refused all communication with the shore, and his request to be permitted to proceed to Calcutta has been denied him. There is not in all this much that is at variance with our previous treatment of this unfortunate man;—on the contrary the whole proceeding only crowns with consistency the iniquitous and disgraceful course of conduct we have so long pursued with respect to him. It is right that the public should not only be acquainted with the facts to which we refer, but should be enabled to judge of the full extent of the injuries which the ex-King of Quedah is suffering at our hands—and as there are many of our readers to whom the politics of this part of the world are not perhaps quite so familiar as they should be, we propose here to give a brief sketch of the history of our connection with Quedah—in order to shew for how much the hapless ruler of that country has to thank us—and how well we can sometimes prove to the people of these countries that a government representing the most powerful and enlightened nation in the world can condescend to acts of perfidy and injustice.

It is now somewhat more than fifty years since our connexion with Quedah began—having originated in negotiations for transferring to the British government the island of Penang, which was then a dependency of that country. The reigning King of Quedah courted our friendship with avidity—believing as he did that he would find in our alliance a sure source of protection against his old and powerful enemies the Siamese—and, as he was probably well aware that our government attached considerable importance to the acquisition of Penang, he no doubt thought himself in a situation that would enable him to make that important object a preliminary with which we would readily comply. It seems, indeed, beyond dispute that he was led to expect our assistance against the Siamese—and that expectations of that kind constituted his most powerful motives for transferring Penang to the British government. And it was no doubt with such an understanding on his part, that we entered upon possession of that island in 1786—although the only clearly expressed condition at this time appears to have been that our Government should pay the King of Quedah and his heirs or successors the annual sum of 10,000 Drs. as compensation for the transfer of the island, so long as we should continue in possession. Mr. LIGHT, however, by whose instrumentality the transfer was effected, was authorised by the Supreme Government to state that he would “employ the contenance and influence of the Company for the security of the King of Quedah.” Things appear to have remained upon this footing up to the year 1798 when a Treaty, comprising fourteen articles, was entered into between TLA OODEEN the then King of Quedah and Sir GEORGE LEITH, Lieut. Governor of Prince of Wales Island on the part of the British Government. It was by this treaty that the strip of sea coast, since called Province Wellesley; opposite to Penang, was made over to the English, and which appears to have been given up without any additional consideration in money being received in return,—as the annual compensation to be paid to the King of Quedah remains by the first article of this Treaty the same as arranged by Mr. LIGHT—viz. Drs. 10,000 a year. All the remaining articles of the Treaty in question are of subordinate importance with the exception of the following clause of the fourteenth, viz.—

“The fourteen articles being settled and concluded, between His Majesty and the English Company, the countries of Quedah and Pulo Pinang shall be as one country, and whoever shall depart or deviate from any part of this agreement, the Almighty punish and destroy him, he shall not prosper.”

In the letter from the Supreme Government authorising the Treaty, it is moreover stated that: “This Government will always keep an armed vessel stationed to guard the island of Penang, and the Coasts adjacent belonging to the King of Quedah,” and that “the Governor General will take care that the King of Quedah shall not be a sufferer by an English Settlement being formed on the island of Penang.” In what light could this promise of a ship of war to guard his coasts, contained in the letter, and the international unity proclaimed in the 14th Article of the treaty, be regarded by the King of Quedah if not as an assurance of protection to that country against its enemies? It was not long, however, before he learned how much he had been deceived. The Siamese laid the country under new burdens, and renewed their oppressive exactions—and repeated appeals and supplications to our Government at Penang for assistance passed unheeded.

At length in 1821 a powerful Siamese fleet made a descent upon the coast—and disembarked a numerous force in the Quedah river. Their appearance was so sudden and unexpected that a sufficient body of men could not be brought together to oppose their landing and further progress. Some combats were fought—but the result was that the Siamese prevailed—and that the King after a narrow escape, and having endured the utmost privation and fatigue, found his way over to Penang where he was hospitably received by the government, and lodged in a style not unbecoming his rank. One of his sons however was taken prisoner by the enemy and conveyed to Siam. At this juncture, it appears the government of Malacca, then under the Dutch, made proffers of assistance to the Penang authorities to aid in the expulsion of the Siamese from Quedah—which were declined by the latter on the plea of being fettered by the instructions of the Supreme Government, and also on the ground of Mr. CRAWFORD being about to proceed on

an embassy to Siam, who might thus have it in his power to negotiate for the restoration and future independence of Quedah. Mr. CRAWFORD'S Embassy, however, unfortunately failed, as well in its principal object, which was to establish a treaty of commerce with Siam, as in that which related to Quedah—the rajah of which country was required by His Siamese Majesty to be delivered up to him!

In 1826, Captain BRUNER'S mission to Siam to conclude a Treaty with that power took place, the fruits of which embassy were the celebrated Treaty which is seldom or never mentioned but to be denounced, and in the 10th article of which, Quedah is for the first time (by any British authority at least) recognised and treated as a “province” of Siam.

By the 13th Article “the Siamese engage to the English, that the Siamese shall remain in Quedah and take proper care of that country and of its people”—the English in return stipulate that they “will not permit the former governor of Quedah, or any of his followers, to attack, disturb or injure in any manner the territory of Quedah, or any other territory subject to Siam”; and “the English engage that they will make arrangements for the former governor of Quedah to go and live in some other country, and not in Prince of Wales Island or Pulo, or in Perak, Salengore or any Burman country. If the English do NOT LET the former governor of Quedah go and live in some other country as here engaged, the Siamese may continue to levy an export duty upon paddy and rice in Quedah.”

In 1831, Tuanku Koodin the nephew of the ex-King made a desperate but unsuccessful attempt to expel the Siamese and regain Quedah. His failure was chiefly owing to the share taken by our Government in the contest, as our armed vessels instead of “guarding the coast belonging to the King of Quedah” were busy in destroying his own vessels when they attempted to do the same thing—firing into them and sinking them when engaged with the Siamese fleet. The same year the ex-King was conveyed to Malacca, in consequence, it is supposed, of the representation of the Siamese, arising out of the recent attempt of his nephew.

The “former governor of Quedah” however, by some unaccountable metamorphosis no longer “His Majesty of Purlis and Quedah,” still continued to reside in Penang—and did not remove for several years subsequently.

In the early part of last year, as we have noticed in former numbers of this paper, the ex-King was permitted to leave Malacca, where he had continued to reside since 1831. It is understood that he had agreed to fix his abode at Delhi. But however that may be, it appears almost certain that such was never his intention—and his subsequent conduct proves that, desperate as were his prospects of success, he still clung to the hope of recovering his kingdom from the Siamese, and of being restored to his lost rights and dignities. It does certainly appear improbable that he should have entertained the idea that our Government would not interfere between him and the Siamese in the assertion of his claims, altho' he is reported to have encouraged that belief among his followers. But, whatever might have been his intentions or expectations he could never have conceived himself to be assuming a position that was at all likely to bring down upon himself and followers such a visitation as that to which we have referred at the commencement of this article. Nothing short of the commencement of actual hostilities by the ex-King against the Siamese, either in Quedah itself, or in some other territory dependent on them, can afford the slightest pretext under any article of the treaty with Siam of 1826, for the use of arms against him by the British government. No hostilities, however of the kind had commenced—in fact, no hostilities at all. The ex-King was residing, as he had been for about a year before, in the island of Bruas belonging to the independent Malay chief of Perak—with whose sanction and concurrence, it no doubt was that he had fixed his abode in that place. Under these circumstances H. M. Sloop Zebra, with a gunboat of the local government, is despatched from Penang to Bruas to remove him thence by force. That vessel executes her commission to the letter, and with a vast loss of life to the adherents of the unfortunate King, of whom it appears that more than sixty were killed and wounded, while of the crew of the sloop-of-war several also met with a similar fate. It appears to us quite needless to inquire on what side the first shot was fired. We were the aggressors *ab initio*—for any attempt to remove the ex-King from Bruas was unwarranted from the first and we conceive he would have been justified in at once resisting by every means in his power any such attempt. We had no business with him there except for the purposes of negotiation—and all lawful means of persuasion might have been used in order to induce him to return to our protection. But how are we entitled to expect that force would not be repelled by force, unless we trusted to the terror of our arms, and not the justice of our cause! What is there in the Treaty with Siam that renders it incumbent on us to invade the independent territory of Perak in order to drive “the former governor of Quedah” from the shelter which he there sought from our protection? The British government might have “let him go and live” in any country he chose with no worse consequence than subjecting the trade of Quedah to an export duty on paddy and rice! There is every probability as it is that this duty, the imposition of which is by the treaty the only alternative of our letting the unfortunate ex-King go and live in any one of the countries objected to by the Siamese, has been levied all along.

—It would astonish us, at any rate, to hear that a single inquiry had ever been made on the subject, with the view of ascertaining whether such has been the case or not. Unless therefore it was for the purpose of making our whole conduct all of a piece towards the ex-King of Quedah—defeated of a single strain of justice, humanity, or sound policy—it is impossible to conceive what can have dictated the late movement on Bruas. It is doubtless a fit and proper consummation of our past iniquity with respect to him—and it certainly ought not at this time of day to excite surprise in any one that we should now act in this manner towards an unfortunate old man with whom we have made treaties on the one day as “His Majesty of Purlis and Quedah,” and styled on the morrow at the dictation of the despot of the Siam, the “former governor of Quedah”—although it is only by right of his lawful and undisputed sovereignty of that country that we have held and still continue to hold possession of Penang—to whom we promised, under invocation of the vengeance of Heaven if we failed to fulfil it; that his country and Pulo Penang should be *as one country*, while we meanly gave it up, without one word spoken or one blow struck on its behalf, a prey to the rancour of ancient enmity; and to the scourge of the most monstrous oppression. Such a course of conduct must ever excite the warmest indignation, while at the same time it provokes contempt for the pitiful and timorous policy which suggested it; and it will be too fortunate if its authors do not encounter the retribution which so justly awaits it.