

On Monday last application was made to the local government for its assistance in procuring the release of a considerable amount of property, belonging to merchants at this settlement, which has been detained in the trading port of Calantan, on the Eastern Coast of the Peninsula. The value of the property in question is stated to be between fifty and sixty thousand dollars; and the cause assigned for its detention is a contest respecting the right of succession, consequent on the decease of the late Rajah of the territory. It appears that, during the continuance of this contest, no trading vessel is to be allowed to leave the port, although as many as think proper are at liberty to enter it—and the *sanpan pakats* from Singapore have not only been laid under embargo, but one or other of the contending parties had contrived to possess himself of all the guns and other munition of war which they had on board; as a very opportune supply in the existing emergency—so that they are themselves made to contribute to the maintenance of the struggle which is the cause of their detention. The local authorities have answered the call for their interposition, by the transmission of a remonstrance to the head-men at Calantan against the proceeding complained of, and a Portuguese gentleman went as the bearer of their despatches, having been prevailed on to undertake that mission by the parties interested. The government has, we presume, done as much as they are permitted to do on such occasions—which is so little that it could scarcely be less—but we suppose that had the Steamer been on the spot, she would no doubt have been employed—an alternative not only more likely to conduce to the speedy liberation of the property detained, but which would have saved the parties to whom it belongs from the necessity of fitting out an expedition at their own cost.

In Malay states a *War of Succession* almost invariably follows the decease of the Rajah, and with their other feudal contentions are the bane of them all—oppressing the inhabitants, checking industry, and obstructing commerce. It is assuredly the interest of the British government in this quarter, to find a remedy for these evils, among the states over which we yet retain some influence, or are authorised to exert any. This remedy may be said to be in our own hands. Thanks to the Dutch treaty of 1824 our future connexion with Malay states is confined to the Peninsula exclusively—but we think that we are in a position to render our influence throughout the whole of that region highly beneficial to the nations by whom it is occupied, and to make our authority paramount without exciting jealousy or apprehension. The English are not known to the Malays as conquerors and oppressors, as the Dutch are in all their possessions throughout the Archipelago. Our settlements in this part of the world were not wrested from their natu-

ral rulers by violence, nor obtained through fraud or chicanery—on the contrary both Penang and Singapore, on our first settling, were uninhabited wastes, useless to their owners, from whom they were taken over at a valuation out of all proportion to any advantage they could otherwise have hoped to derive from them. Our long establishment in these places, without any attempt to enlarge our boundaries, must have satisfied the Malays that extensive territorial acquisitions do not form part of our policy—as the evidence they have of our power would not permit them to doubt of our ability to possess ourselves of both coasts of the Peninsula, from one extremity to the other. Every British port that is known to Malays (and these are only the three in the Straits) being free, is a circumstance too, which must convince them of the earnest desire we entertain to give encouragement to trade, and must tend to prove to them that commerce is our chief object in settling on their coasts. Under these circumstances, any attempt to interpose our authority, for the prevention of these commotions which so constantly agitate the Malayan states in our neighbourhood, would at least not likely be met with any opposition arising from a dread that it was our final intention to reduce them entirely under our sway, and totally supersede the authority of the native rulers of the country—although we are persuaded that the known existence of such an intention would excite sentiments of hostility among none but the chiefs themselves and their immediate adherents, while it would be most acceptable to the great bulk of their subjects. But without any such intention, and only with views directed to putting an end to these struggles for power, and contentions for authority, which are of such frequent occurrence in native states, one of the first acts of our government ought to be, to negotiate with the Malayan chiefs of the Peninsula for the paramount right of granting investiture to every successor of a deceased prince, and of excluding any competitor for the vacant dignity who was not recognised by us as the rightful heir or lawful successor. When the Dutch obtained the complete ascendancy over the native states of the Archipelago, and it ceased to be any longer an object with them to create disputes and stir up strife among the latter, in order to weaken them by internal dissensions, and thus obtain a footing for their own power, they took upon themselves this right of investiture; and its assumption and exercise by them at least prevented the bloodshed and confusion incidental to a contested right of succession. But we would not have the British government to arrogate this right, nor indeed do we think it would be at all necessary to do so, as we are confident that it would only require us to propose it, in order to have it at once conceded by every Malayan state of the Peninsula—the

population of all of which it is known, look forward with the greatest apprehension to the decease of a Rajah, as the forerunner of so many disastrous consequences. When the interposition of British authority was seen to secure tranquility on such occasions, and to compose strife and dissension, the population of a state would soon discover that a still more intimate connexion with us would be to their profit. As regards the States of Calantan and Tringanu, they are already in no small measure indebted to us, for affording them protection against Siamese, as in the treaty of 1826 with that power, we provide by express stipulation that these States shall not be molested, nor their commerce interrupted by any incursions of the Siamese, to which they were formerly so much exposed—a stipulation which has not, we believe, been observed to the very letter, but which is perhaps the sole barrier between them and subjection to Siam. We are not therefore without some good pretext as regards the latter territories, for claiming the right of investiture in cases of succession—this right conceded, it would not then be difficult to persuade the chiefs to abandon the trading monopoly so frequently assumed by them, to the exclusion of so many of their subjects from any participation in the external trade of the country, and which so effectually subdues the spirit of commercial enterprise among them. These are advantages well worth the while of an enlightened government to secure for the states of the peninsula—and unless something of the kind be attempted, they must sink into a still more deplorable condition than they are at present—their governments are daily weakening—commotions spring up on the death of every chief of a territory, besides other feudal contests unceasingly occurring,—the compromises that are made to satisfy pretenders to the chief authority multiplies the numbers of petty chiefs, and a new harvest of little tyrants is the certain result of every contested title to supremacy, and new elements of anarchy and confusion are thus introduced, which prevail without check or control of any kind.