

SUMATRAN PIRATES

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We read in the *Journal de la Haye* of the 16th:—

The following are some details of an expedition made by the British ships of war *Harlequin* and *Wanderer*, and the Company's steamer *Diana*, to Atyn, on the coast of Sumatra, to obtain satisfaction for the pillage committed on the English merchant ships the *Fatal Khair* at Quallah Battu, and the *Royal Spankie* at Quallah Murdoo. Having arrived before Atyn, Captains G. Hastings and Seymour, in command of the expedition, demanded and obtained an audience from the Sultan. It appears that the latter succeeded in exculpating himself completely from the reproach of complicity in this affair, and that he even offered the English captains to assist them in their undertaking. The town of Atyn, formerly so powerful, is at present in a deplorable state. Its Sultan formerly the most powerful prince of the greatest Malay state, is now so weak that he cannot keep in respect the neighbouring chiefs, who, however, depend nominally on him. It is probably owing to this circumstance that is due the little security enjoyed by British trading vessels, not only on this part of the coast of Sumatra, but in all the Malay states in general; for there, where the administration is divided into parties, the power of the authority is paralysed and powerless to prevent or to punish the excesses committed by little princes towards defenceless merchant vessels. Accompanied by some natives, and provided with letters from the Sultan for the Toeankoe (or Toekoe) Pakir or Pedir, they cast anchor before Pedir, and demanded that in 24 hours Toeankoe Abbas, author of the pillage of the *Fatal Khair*, should be delivered up to them, and that a sum of money should be paid equivalent to the loss which that vessel had sustained by the pillage. The delay having passed, and Toeankoe Pakir not finding himself not able to satisfy their demand, the English captains ordered the ships' boats to enter the river of Batoo, and approach the town of that name. After having again in vain demanded reparation, they gave orders to attack the town.

A proclamation was then addressed to the natives, who were assembled in great numbers, in which it was announced to them that the injury then inflicted on them was wholly caused by the pillage committed on the vessel the *Fatal Khair*, and they were advised to abandon the chiefs who permitted such acts of violence. The damage caused to the town of Batoo and its bazaars is immense. However, the natives were regarding the flames consuming their habitations without betraying the slightest emotion, it may even be said with indifference, when suddenly they fell on the English who had advanced too close, but fortunately they were put to flight. All this occurred in the course of the 10th February last. On the following day the *Diana* steamer towed the ships towards Murdoo, where they arrived in the evening. During the whole of the night fires were seen on the coast, and the cannon of the town were heard at intervals, which showed that the inhabitants had been apprised of the arrival of the English, and were preparing for resistance. On the 12th, at break of day, the boats quitted the ships to approach the coast, where hundreds of natives were assembled. When the boats had reached within shot of the enemy, they were ordered by the natives to fall back, and immediately some of the natives, who were concealed by an intrenchment formed by nature, opened a fire upon the boats, which, however, succeeded in reaching the coast. A part of the crews landed and took possession of the place, whilst the natives dispersed in all directions.—The English then ascended the river, ravaging everything in their way; and, after having burned the best houses in the town—viz., those of the Rajah, thinking their mission at an end, they retraced their steps. But when they arrived at the point where they had landed they found another assemblage of natives, who fired upon them. They again landed and attacked the natives, who fled. After this the boats continued their route. It is wonderful that only 130 men should have accomplished such results, and in so short time, in the presence of several thousands of the natives. The loss of the blacks was considerable, whilst the English had only two men killed and a dozen wounded. It remains to be seen whether this severe lesson will suffice to prevent a recurrence of such excesses on the part of the natives."