

ATTACK ON THE PIRATES OF SAKARRAN.

(From the Singapore Free Press.)

On Monday evening the Hon. Company's steamer Phlegethon (Scott) returned from Borneo, bringing accounts of very important operations against the pirates of Sakarran, attended with much success, but also, we regret to say, with considerable loss on our side. Below we give an account of the expedition, the detailed nature of which renders any remarks of our own at present unnecessary. The Dido was to follow the Phlegethon to Singapore, and may be expected in about eight days hence. The Samarang (Sir E. Belcher, K.C.B.) was also at Sarawak when the Phlegethon left:—

"Last year I was enabled to furnish you with an account of the proceedings of her Majesty's steamer Dido (Captain the Hon. Henry Keppel), against the piratical tribe of Serebas; and I am now happy to forward a brief notice of the measures taken by that officer against the equally piratical Dyaks of Sakarran.

"The piracies of these Dyaks have long been notorious, and they have carried on their depredations along the entire north-west coast of Borneo, and to the southward even as far as Celebes. The principal promoters of piracy were Shereef Sahib of Sadung, and his brother, Shereef Moolah of Sakarran, and the boldness of the Dyaks is mainly to be attributed to these chiefs, as they were in the habit of sending parties of Malays in every Dyak fleet, both to assist and to guide the Dyaks to their prey. They shared with their Dyak colleagues in all plunder and slaves, and exercised so evil an influence that the popular nickname of Shereef Sahib was Bujang Brani (brave bachelor), the name of the Dyak bird of omen. Sadung has long been the nucleus of piracy, and Malay prahus, frequently manned by Lanuns, were sent to cruise about the Natunas and Sambas, whilst the regular fleets of Lanuns, whenever they visited the coast, met with a friendly reception and drove their nefarious traffic with the inhabitants of Sangie.

Last year the severe lesson given to the Serebas horde alarmed for a time both these piratical Shereefs and their colleagues, the Dyaks of Sakarran, and many promises were then made to Capt. Keppel that they would in future abstain from piracy. On the return of the Dido to China the coast remained quiet for some months, but it appears that about the beginning of this year the final resolve was taken by Shereef Sahib to collect his followers, and, in concert with his brother and the Sakarrans, to resist any attack that might be made upon them.

In April Shereef Sahib, having collected a large fleet of Malay and Dyak prahus, removed to Putusan, and directly began to fortify. No sooner was he established than both Malays and Dyaks were let loose and committed depredations both by sea and land, stopping all trade, and butchering the unhappy inland Dyaks. It appeared as though the abstinence of a few months had given a keener relish to their ordinary pursuits, and it was, therefore, with heartfelt satisfaction that we hailed the arrival of the Dido and the Phlegethon steamer, who came to put an end to a horrible series of crimes, which it is needless for me to dwell upon more at large.

Captain Keppel having inquired into the facts, decided with his usual promptitude on making an immediate attack on Sakarran, and punishing both Malays and Dyaks for their repeated and flagrant acts of piracy so recently committed. On the morning of the 5th of August the steamer Phlegethon, with the boats of the Dido in tow, and accompanied by about 20 native prahus, proceeded to the entrance of the Batong Lupar, which was reached the same evening. On the following morning, the boats having joined, the force moved up to the entrance of the Linga river, and anchored for the tide, to enable the steamer to pass the shoals, which intervene between the Linga and Putusan.

To enable your readers to follow the further proceedings I may here briefly describe the river and the various localities.

Batong Lupar is a noble stream, about two miles in width at its entrance; for 20 miles it is deep and free from danger, and at that distance from the entrance is the considerable river of Linga on the right hand. From the Linga to Putusan is about 20 miles farther; the river is shoal, is obstructed by sand banks, the tide rapid, and at the springs a heavy bore runs in, which is dangerous for boats. From Putusan to the small and rapid river of Undup is from 15 to 20 miles further, and five miles beyond is the town of Sakarran, situated on the junction of the Batong Lupar and the Sakarran.

The river Sakarran, which runs to the left from the town of the same name, is navigable for boats for 40 miles, and is a narrow but pleasant stream, with cleared banks well cultivated, or laid out with fruit trees. The Batong Lupar is likewise well cleared of jungle on the banks, and inhabited by Dyaks, who, however, are less addicted to piracy than the Dyaks of Sakarran.

"The Undup is a small stream, and about 5 miles from its entrance was the town of the same name, the residence of Shereef Moolah. Beyond Undup the stream becomes very narrow, the banks are wooded, and there are no inhabitants until reaching the village of the Undup Dyaks, about 25 miles further. On the morning of the 7th, the steamer, with the boats in tow, weighed at daylight, and advanced towards Putusan; after safely passing the shoals, she anchored for an hour to wait for the rise of the water, and afterwards brought up abreast of the forts of Putusan. The position was not ill chosen, the straggling town being situated within the stream of Graham, the north of which was defended by three forts situated in a bight, whilst the approach was protected by a sandbank, in the middle of the river; another fort was built on a point, close to which the steamer was obliged to pass, and on the left or opposite bank from the town of Putusan. Orders had been given by Captain Keppel not to fire first on the enemy, and on approaching the left hand fort the boats were cast adrift, and pulled for the two forts on the left of the enemy's position. The first fort we found abandoned, but on the approach of the steamer to her anchorage, the fort on the right of the position opened a fire with its guns, which was returned. In the meantime, the boats of the Dido and Phlegethon dashed gallantly at the two forts on the left, and the men landed and carried them. A native boat, manned from the Dido, advanced to the right hand fort, and after an engagement of about 10 minutes, the third and last fort was taken. The village immediately in the vicinity of the forts was burnt, the forts dismantled, and after a short pause the men were

landed, and marched about half a mile to the town of Shereef Sahib, where it was expected a further resistance would be offered. The town, however, was found deserted, and was burnt, while the enemy were pursued in every direction they showed themselves. From 50 to 60 guns of various sizes were taken in and near the forts, and upwards of a ton of gunpowder was found in a detached magazine behind Shereef Sahib's house. It was evident how resolved this chief was to defend himself, as, besides the forts already completed, eight other forts, in different states of forwardness, were in the course of erection; and, had the attack been delayed, greater trouble would have been experienced, and more lives lost in the capture. The 8th and 9th were passed in burning and destroying the rest of the straggling town, and the boats, which were very numerous; and, on the 10th, the force proceeded up the river, and, passing the river Undup, anchored off the deserted town of Sakarran, which was burnt. On the evening of the same day, the native boat before mentioned advanced up the Undup a few miles, and on the morning of the 11th attacked and carried a small fort, well situated on a hill, and defended by a barrier across the river. The enemy retired up a hill, and as they kept up a straggling fire, a gallant native chief, named Patingi Ali, landed with his party, and drove them, sword in hand, from their position. On the 12th, after overcoming numerous obstacles, the boats reached the town of Undup, which was deserted, and passing on (leaving the Malays to destroy it) worked till dark in removing the trees which had been felled across the river. The morning of the 13th, the same obstacles were encountered and overcome by 12 o'clock, and the lighter boats were enabled to advance, and continued during the day, pulling against a strong fresh in the river. Early on the 14th it was evident that we were approaching the enemy, as a few boats were fallen in with and taken in full retreat; and about 9 o'clock A.M. a large fleet was found in a creek below the Dyak village of Undup. Above the creek, on a rising ground, was the temporary encampment of the enemy, and the Dyak village stood on a hill above, at a long musket range distance. The enemy abandoned their boats and encampment and opened their fire from the Dyak village upon our party. The position was commanding, and, I regret to say, that Mr. Wade, the first lieutenant of the Dido, was killed whilst gallantly advancing to the assault. The place was carried without a check, and the enemy were completely and finally routed and driven in every direction into the jungle. The object of the advance having been thus gained, the force dropped down the same evening to the still burning town of Shereef Moolah. The 15th and 16th were passed up the steamer, to rest the men after the severe fatigue encountered up the Undup, and in preparing for an advance up the Sakarran river.

"The Sakarran, as I have said, is well cultivated on the banks, and the advance was made for two days with ease, although each night we were annoyed by parties of Dyaks, who threw spears from the bank, and occasionally used the sampans or blow-pipes. An advance of Malay boats each day preceded the force, and burned numerous villages on the way, but all the property had been carefully removed into the interior, and it was evident that the enemy were prepared beforehand for our coming.

"On the morning of the 19th a further advance was made till 9 o'clock, when the leading boats of the Dido stopped to breakfast, and a native force of about 10 small boats under Patingi Ali was sent in advance to reconnoitre, with strict orders to fall back on any appearance of the enemy. These boats soon came up with a strong force of Dyaks, stationed on either bank, and rashly advancing across a barrier thrown across the river, pushed forward. When beyond the reach of aid, a raft was cut adrift and six large native prahus, with from 50 to 60 men in each, suddenly bore upon them (three from either bank), impelled down the strong stream, and closed before it was possible to retreat. A scene of confusion and dismay followed, and our native boats one after another were captured, and about 30 men were speared before the second rig and pinnace of the Dido arrived to their relief. The fortune of the day was soon turned, the war-boats were captured, and the Dyaks were driven with great slaughter from the banks whilst the boats of the force advanced upon them as quickly as the current would permit.

"The loss of the enemy must have been very great as a body of 4000 or 5000 men were exposed to our fire-arms for several minutes, and the crews of the war prahus severely handled before they got ashore. The expedition may here be said to have closed, as no further opposition was offered, and the boats returning to the Phlegethon, reached Putusan on the 22d, where we were joined by two boats of her Majesty's ship Samarang (Sir Edward Belcher), and on the night of the 24th once again reached Sarawak. Having remained in Sarawak a day or two, Captain Keppel received information that Shereef Sahib had taken refuge in the Linga river, and that he was there collecting his followers with the assistance of Shereef Jaffer, a resident of that place. On the 28th the Phlegethon steamer and the boats of her Majesty's ships Dido and Samarang once more started and proceeded up the river Linga. After pushing forward for two days through numerous obstacles, we had the satisfaction to learn that Shereef Sahib, on hearing of our return, finally and precipitately abandoned the country, and fled across the mountains to the Pontianak river. The boats, in consequence, returned to Banting, when a conference was held with the Malays and Balow Dyaks of the place, and it was fully explained to them that the measures taken against piracy were for the protection of all peaceful communities of the coast. From these people many assurances were received of their willingness to co-operate with us, and one and all were alike urgent that the government of their river should be transferred to the English. On the 4th of September the force reached Sarawak, and thus terminated a brilliant and successful expedition against the worst pirates on the coast of Borneo.

"It is needless here to mention the gallant conduct of all concerned, but I may briefly sum up the service performed and the obstacles overcome. A Malay horde, long the terror of the coast, fully provided with arms and ammunition, have been defeated and dispersed, and their leaders driven from the country, while numerous peaceable communities in the vicinity have been released from a thralldom which has long borne heavily on their industry, and other chiefs have been shown what they may expect should they follow the same course. The Sakarran Dyaks have been punished along with the Malays, and there is every reason to hope, now that the evil influence of the chiefs is removed, they may shortly be reclaimed from their piratical habits; and, above all, the sufferings of the inland Dyaks have been ended, and the trade (which has nearly been more and more obstructed) protected from a horde of pirates who have long carried on their depredations with impunity. A shoaling and rapid river has been ascended for upwards of 100 miles, obstacles of no common description have been removed, and the enemy beaten wherever encountered; and all this performed with a cheerfulness and good-will which renders war an amusement as well as duty."