

CHINA. THE EASTERN ARCHIPELAGO AND AUSTRALIA.

SINGAPORE, MARCH 7, 1848. — The Overland Mail of Dec. 24 arrived at Singapore Feb. 7, per Peninsular and Oriental steamer Lady Mary Wood; happily none of the failures in Europe have yet affected any of the commercial firms here. On Feb. 8, 9, 10, and 11, it blew almost a hurricane from the north-east, accompanied by a heavy sea; the whole of the Singapore beach was encroached upon; the casurina trees planted along the road-side on the esplanade were washed away; the shipping happily sustained no damage. The steamer Lady Mary Wood, which left this on the 8th ult. for China, put back on the 10th, having proceeded as far as Pedro Branca, where, the wind and sea being very high, the vessel at full power could not make one mile an hour. As the coals were expending to no purpose, Captain Evans resolved to return to Singapore and again started for Hong Kong on the 11th. So high a sea has not been before witnessed at Singapore. Several plantations sustained damage, especially the nutmeg trees. After the 12th, the weather became calm and sultry. The influenza made its appearance, and still rages, few escaping its attacks—some fatal cases have occurred amongst the juvenile class. We look for the appearance of rain to remove the epidemic. The all-engrossing topic here has been the sad tragedy committed by convicts on board the ship General Wood, when the captain, officers, and above 75 persons perished by butchery and shipwreck. I have drawn up a separate narrative of the melancholy affair, as the subject demanded remarks in detail. Cases of piracy are almost of daily occurrence within the vicinity of the harbour, and yet the government cannot be induced to organise a harbour police. On Feb. 16 a boat, containing four Chinese, who were proceeding to Tanjong to cut timber, was attacked by two Malay prahus, armed with kris, spears, &c.; two of the Chinese were killed, one jumped overboard, and has not since been heard of, and the fourth was left dangerously wounded; the boat

was plundered of its contents, consisting of two piculs of rice and a basket of fish, the whole worth six dollars. The Malays have escaped. Two other cases of piracy and loss of life have occurred during the month of February. In all three instances the outrages were perpetrated in the light of day and within sight of the harbour and town of Singapore. The H. C. steam frigate Auckland, which in January last proceeded to China with 35 artillerymen from the Straits, for service at Canton, returned to Singapore Feb. 24. Sir John Davis having patched up the affair in China, was as anxious to send the troops away as he was before urgent for their being sent on. The Auckland took the artillery on to Penang, and returned here on March 4th. H. M. S. Dædalus, from Hong-Kong, arrived at Singapore Feb. 25, and will await here until after the departure of the mail, when she will proceed to Penang, remain there until relieved by the Mæander, Capt. Keppel, when the Dædalus will return to Singapore for stores, and sail for England. During the past ten or fifteen days the town has been set in commotion in consequence of several large placards, in the Chinese language, posted at the corners of the leading thoroughfares. These placards were of an inflammatory nature, denouncing of the conduct of the government and the police generally, and of the officiating deputy of police in particular—the latter having become obnoxious to the Chinese, in consequence of his untiring energy and success in the apprehension of common gamblers, coiners, and other bad characters. The appearance of these placards is a bad sign; it is following up the pernicious practice so common and fraught with so much mischief at Canton. The editor of the *Straits Times* has brought to the notice of the authorities the existence of six

or seven Chinese printing establishments where inflammatory placards, handbills, &c., are printed by blocks. Handbills calling upon the Chinese to quit the country or associate in putting down (by violence) the alleged harshness of the police are circulated among the hueys, or secret societies. The *Straits Times* has very properly recommended that these Chinese printing establishments should be registered as required of "all presses," by Act XI. of 1835, for if beyond reach of the authorities in case of violating the law; the most dangerous consequences may ensue, and the unruly Celestial mob at Singapore become as influential as the Canton agitators. Speaking of the Hueys, I may mention that about a fortnight since a regular pitched battle took place at Bukit Teinah, seven miles from the town of Singapore, between the partisans of rival Hueys, each party endeavouring to overcome and carry off the other, and to put them to torture and death at leisure! No lives were lost on either side, and finding each party a match for the other a truce was agreed to, although not until after many wounds were inflicted. The quietly disposed Chinese planters were compelled to abandon their work; many of them proceeded to town for the protection of the police, there being no rural constabulary force. These Huey feuds form a great drawback to Chinese emigrants unless there exists a vigilant police possessing sufficient numerical strength to keep them in awe. On the 23rd February, the H. C. steamer Tenasserim arrived at Singapore from Madras, having on board 265 rank and file of her Majesty's 25th Regiment, under the command of Major O'Connor. The other portion of the left wing are to come on in the Hon. Company's steamer Enterprise, and it is stated that her Majesty's 18th Royal Irish will probably be brought to Singapore per Bentinck steamer. All this activity among the troops has arisen out of the unstable policy of Sir John Davis, who wrote down here for several regiments for service in China. The Vulture steam-frigate was despatched from Hong-Kong with a countermand for all troops; had the Vulture proceeded at once to Madras, instead of remaining at anchor here several days, the expense of transporting the troops might have been spared. The Vulture would have arrived at Madras on the 13th or 14th Feb. The portion of her Majesty's 25th, which came in the Tenasserim, did not embark till the 18th, and left on the following morning. The countermand which was sent, *via* Galle, would not reach Madras before February 20th. It is probable the departure of other troops will be stopped. The Hon. Col. Butterworth, C.B., Governor of the Straits, returned to Singapore with his amiable and accomplished lady on March 4, after an absence of six weeks, during which time the governmental duties were performed by the resident councillor, Hon. Mr. Church. Her Majesty's sloop Ringdove, Capt. E. A. Inglefield, returned to this port on the 6th inst., having been to Penang to make a demonstration, with the view of awing the King of Quedah into a compliance with the dictates of the Bengal government. On the same day, the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamer Lady Mary Wood, arrived from Hongkong, having on board General d'Aguilar. The general landed at noon under a salute from the battery, and became the guest of his honour the governor. In the evening an entertainment was given at Government House, at which the general was present, and expressed himself extremely satisfied at the attentions he received during a short stay at Singapore.

P.S.—MARCH 7, NOON.—The Honourable Company's steamer Hooghly proceeded this morning to the North Natunas, in search after the Chinese convicts that escaped in the boats of the "General Wood." Her Majesty's sloop Ringdove leaves to-day for the Anambas, on the same search as the Hooghly. The Honourable Company's steamer Tenasserim, with part of the left wing of her Majesty's 25th Borderers left Singapore this morning to return to Madras, General d'Aguilar having advised that step in consequence of Sir John Davis having written officially to the government of India to countermand the despatch of troops to China. The Honourable Company's steamer Auckland is now here; after some repairs are done to her engines she will, I believe, proceed to Cochin China, to endeavour to release Mr. Victor Horaes, supposed to be still in confinement in that country. The following important intelligence from the Sooloo Archipelago has been received by the editor of the *Straits Times* this morning. The early departure of the steamer to Galle has prevented its publication, but I send you a galley proof of the news. Having just seen the official despatches I can vouch for its correctness: