

THE MALAYS RUNNING A-MUCK IN A
RIGHT DIRECTION.

Commerce is undoubtedly the mightiest instrument of the civilisation of mankind, and the perusal of an Indian newspaper which arrived by the last mail affords as striking an example of its beneficent effects on a small scale as any we have read of. The sovereignty of the island of Singapore was purchased by the British Government from two Malay chieftains about thirty years ago; and one of these with his followers retired to a romantic but uncultivated spot on the coast of the island, with a moderate pension from the government, quite sufficient to maintain them in comfort, but not enough to convert them into what Napoleon called "fattening hogs." In this position the chieftain is possessed, as an inhabitant of the island, of no political or civil authority whatever; or in other words, he is simply a British subject under British law. Before the last thirty years this chieftain and his followers were pirates, or at least, like the rest of the nation they belonged to, they thought piracy no dishonest or unprofitable pastime. The following interesting account of the present condition of the retreat of the *quondam* pirates will be found well worth perusal. We will only premise that the reformed village is named Tuluh-balangah, which we believe means "Mullet cove."

The great changes, and in most instances improvements, which have taken place of late years in Singapore, both as regards the architecture of the town and the cultivation of the country, are nowhere so strikingly manifested as at Tulloh Blangah, the residence of his Highness the Tumungong. There, within a few years past, but especially in more recent times, the whole aspect of things has been changed and everywhere improved. A few years ago Tulloh Blangah only presented the appearance of a very dirty Malay village, the royal residence being merely distinguished from its neighbours by being of brick, and if possible dingier and dirtier than the rest. Now everything has put on a new face. The money which has flowed so copiously into the Tulloh Blangah coffers through the successful dealings of his Highness and his followers in the gutta trade, has been more judiciously applied than is generally the case when Malays become possessed of a little cash, and instead of being expended on evanescent shows and spectacles, or squandered at the gaming-table and cock-pit, it has been laid out in improving the outward appearance of Tulloh Blangah. His Highness has built for himself several extremely neat houses and baleis in the European style, which are gay with green and white paint; and many of his followers have done the same, their smart, green venetianed, tile-roofed houses being an extreme contrast to the rude huts in which they formerly were content to live. The old palace, now the residence of the mother of the Tumungong, has also been cleaned up and whitewashed, and altogether has a very respectable appearance. A small but elegant mosque, costing about one thousand dollars, has replaced the old one, and near this a substantial granite aqueduct brings the water from the springs on the neighbouring hill within easy reach of the village matrons. One thing very strikingly shows that the Tulloh Blangah denizens have not only adopted European ideas of comfortable houses, but also European ideas of decency. In former days any one who extended his morning's ride to Tulloh Blangah might see men, women, and children bathing at the numerous wells on the road side, without any screen between them and the road. It has apparently been discovered that this is not quite correct, and therefore these bathing places have been fenced round with attaps, while some of these within the last few months have given place, opposite the old palace, to substantial brick and chunam erections, which, such is the progress of exclusivism in Tulloh Blangah, are guarded, for the use of their proper owners, by lock and key. In addition to these Malay residences, several large European houses have also been constructed in the close vicinity of Tulloh Blangah, and we have heard of others about to be erected. No less remarkable is the spirit of agricultural improvement which seems to have seized upon the Tumungong and his followers. The hills overhanging the village, and which heretofore were covered with a thick jungle, giving shelter and cover to the tigers and other less ferocious denizens of the woods, are now being rapidly divested of their coverings, and planted with fruit and spice trees. Much of this improvement is no doubt owing to the advice and example of the European gentlemen, whose opinion his Highness has the sense to ask, and still greater sense to follow; but even making allowance for all this, enough still remains to show that there must be a real desire to adopt the comforts and conveniences, and the more settled and industrious habits of civilised life, instead of adhering to the rude habitations and the idle and equivocal habits which formerly were the marks and distinguishing characteristics of the Tulloh Blangah Malays.—*Singapore Free Press, February 1.*