

The Belfast News-Letter
Friday, December 19, 1851

FEARFUL TRAGEDY ON BOARD THE BRITISH SHIP FAWN.—I have to record an event of the most distressing nature which has occurred in the Straits of Malacca since the departure of the last mail. The facts, as far as ascertained, are as follow:—On the 28th of September, the barque Fawn, Alfred Rogers commander, belonging to Calcutta, sailed from Singapore on her return voyage from China to Calcutta. She had been repairing there for three weeks, during which time her crew of Bengal Lascars refused to work and to proceed in her, although four months' pay was due to them. A new crew of Javanese and Malays was supplied by a shipping master, who warned Captain Rogers against ill-using them, as the Malay character is revengeful, and so widely different from that of the Bengalees. It appears that the vessel held on her course for six days without any untoward occurrence, but, on the sixth day, the chief mate found the burra-tindal smoking down the forehatch, whereupon he not only kicked and abused him, but brought him on deck, and there inflicted corporeal punishment in presence of the whole crew. About midnight, the Malays and Javanese mutinied, and murdered the captain, who was sleeping on deck; about daylight, the second mate was killed, being almost cut to pieces. The first mate and Mr. Elphick, a passenger, defended themselves in one of the cabins for nearly twenty-four hours after the captain's death, when the former jumped out of the port and was drowned. Elphick died fighting with a handspike against his assailants. There were two ladies on board—Mrs. Rogers, the captain's wife, and Mrs. Bechem, her sister, the widow of a military officer, and her child. I have not learned, with any degree of certainty, how they were treated by the mutineers; but it would appear that the wretches did not intend to kill them, for they lowered them into a boat, which swamped, and the three were accidentally drowned. When the vessel was cleared of all Europeans, they scuttled and fired her, although she had a large quantity of copper on board, a portion of which might have easily been removed. The ship finally grounded at Bruas, about fifty miles South of Penang. Part of the crew went on shore, and the remainder came to Singapore in one of the boats, arriving on the 10th. Two Bengalees who were of the party gave information at once to the resident councillor, and the police were set on the scent. Two Cochin-Chinese and three Javanese have been taken, and the Chinese carpenter surrendered. The steamer Hoogly was dispatched on the 13th to look out for the wreck and the rest of the mutineers—part of whom had gone to Penang and given themselves up, and the burra-tindal with the rest were captured at Bruas; this archmover in the plot was wearing the captain's gold watch and chain when seized.—*Colombo Observer.*