

Foreign Miscellany

CHINESE RIOTS AT THE BRITISH SETTLEMENT AT SINGAPORE.

We have received direct by the Overland Mail, the following particulars of a series of riots and outrages committed at Singapore by hostile tribes of Chinese. It is really extraordinary that the British government should have allowed this district to have been for more than a week in the hands of lawless barbarians, and not have had a sufficient force at hand to quell the insurgents. It will be seen that murder, rapine, and plunder was their only object:—

Since noon on Friday, May the 5th, the town of Singapore has been in a state of riot and disorder, threatened by thousands of the Chinese community, members of different Provinces, or rival Hneys acting hostilely towards each other, while a mass of miscreants avail themselves of the general consternation and local disturbance to plunder the shops of the weak and the defenceless.

An occasion, trifling in itself, was seized upon for a demonstration. On Friday morning a dispute commenced between some Chinese about a few cattles of rice, and in the course of two hours the quarrel was espoused by thousands of the same class of the inhabitants. Apprehensive of a general riot the respectable traders closed their shops. Bands of Chinese, armed with bludgeons, and some with knives, were fighting in several streets of the town, while showers of stones and other missiles were flying in all directions. At 2 p.m. the Police Superintendent confessed his inability to suppress the riot, in which at least four or five thousand men were engaged. The work of plunder had commenced, and reinforcements of men landed from the junks. The military was called out, and paraded the principal thoroughfares where the rioters were most numerous, but the latter cautiously withdrew as soon as the bayonets were visible, and re-assembled as soon as the troops had passed. The Governor, Resident Councillor, and the Magistrates, walked through the disaffected parts of the town, the combatants retiring from each street before the above gentlemen entered.

At daylight on Saturday fighting and plunder was resumed. Several defenceless traders' houses and shops were broken open and rifled of the contents. At one place, corner of Phillip-street, the inmates kept up a desultory fire upon the assailants for nearly a quarter of an hour. The police were unable to cope with the assailants. The military were again sent for, but from the humane and somewhat mistaken forbearance of the Executive, they were restricted to parading the principal thoroughfares,—the fighting and plundering going on as soon as their backs were turned.

At four o'clock on Sunday morning four Magistrates and forty Special Constables patrolled the streets in which the Chinese reside, but nothing transpired until daylight, when an attempt was made to plunder a house at the corner of Circular-road, which, however, was timeously prevented by the gentlemen patrols.

In the afternoon of Sunday some Hokien coolies in the employ of Mr. Caldwell proceeded to town to purchase rice: on their return, and when on the public road near Caldwell's-bridge, they were attacked and robbed by some Tsin-chew men, but some Hokien men arriving, the Tsin-chew men were worsted, and one of their number killed—some ten or eleven Tsin-chew men are now in custody charged with highway robbery. After sunset a large party of armed Chinese made their appearance at Rochor, and challenged the police to fight—they were preceded by a gong; on their refusing to disperse, Constable Berthier fired over their heads, and that having no effect, after due caution, he fired into the midst of them, and one man was shot dead.

Early on Monday information was received that wholesale murders and burning down of houses were going on in Chan Chu Kang district, whither Mr. Deputy Superintendent Cluff proceeded with a police party. The party under the Deputy Superintendent proceeded along Thomson's-road to the thannah at Chan Chu Kang, and on their way were met by a woman who stated that her husband (the keeper of an opium shop) had been barbarously murdered before her eyes by Chinese, three of whom she pointed out; the latter were taken into custody. On their way to the above-mentioned thannah armed Chinese were observed, and increased in numbers as to venture to demand the surrender of the men in custody. The demand was of course refused, and a rescue was attempted, but observing the above-mentioned woman in a palanquin the Chinese endeavoured to kill her; a furious assault was made on the palanquin, which was literally smashed, Mr. Cluff, however, succeeded in lodging the unfortunate woman safely in the thannah, an atap building. In other parts of the country scenes of disorder, murder, and robbery were being perpetrated by the Tsin-chew people on the Hokien and *vice versa*, just as the one or the other of these tribes happened to be numerically strong. At Gaylang the village was saved by the timely interference of the Police Jemadar and his peons, who kept up a smart fire until the Chinese retreated. The rural districts wore the appearance of the utmost disquietude.

On Tuesday, everything in the town promised return to quiet. In the Tanglin district some murders were committed, and several houses burned. Immense masses of Chinese, armed, were assembled in the rear of Mr. Nicol's Hill, apparently moving towards town. On this day several hundred Malays were placed by the Tumongong under the orders of the executive, as being well adapted to jungle warfare. A

number of armed Chinese secreted in a bangsall at Tanglin were secured by a party of specials, under a magistrate; the same party scoured the jungles and performed good service in capturing, killing, and dispersing armed bands. During the day the heat of the sun was most oppressive. At 9 a.m. a party of Hokien men proceeded to Mr. Davidson's plantation on the Bukit Timah road, and craved protection against a large body of armed men then about one mile distant, waving flags and beating gongs. Justice Davidson with a small party of specials barricaded the bridge. The armed mass crossed the road into Cluny estate and commenced burning down the Hokien huts. Justice Davidson and party crossed the hill, and cut off the Chinese, who then retreated up the road, but finding the party a small one they halted and fired; the fire was returned and Justice Davidson drove them back as far as Ah Geet's house, where was so large a mass of armed people that Justice Davidson and party retired cautiously, until strengthened by a small police force under Constable Berthier. The attack was renewed, and about 20 men were shot dead; the Chinese were again driven back to Ah Geet's house, which by the way was prepared for a stout defence. Information was despatched to town. On the report reaching town that large masses of Chinese were moving in the direction of town from Bukit Timah, Special Simons and others with a party of Malays proceeded thitherward; on their way they met a large party of specials and police, the latter under Deputy Superintendent Cluff; the whole force proceeded to Napier's hill, from whence the smoke of burning houses was seen in the direction of Bukit Timah. The force separated into two divisions, one proceeding along the Bukit Timah-road, and the other by a by-path by means of which they reached the rear of the Chinese force; when near the 6 mile stone some of the Chinese halted, and then bolted off into the jungle, but the main body moved off in front: the specials and their party fired; several Chinese fell and their bodies were carried off. In the afternoon Special Simons, accompanied by 100 Malays, quitted Caldwell's Thannah and proceeded in the direction of Sirangoon; on their way in three Bangsalls were found the bodies of Chinese whose heads had been taken off. On reaching the big tree at Sirangoon a large party of Chinese was met, armed with muskets and other weapons, who soon scampered off on the force opening fire. The party burned down the village of Sirangoon and returned to town with seven or eight prisoners.

The only occurrence of note in town took place behind the Police-office. On the discharge of musketry being heard, Mr. Dunman proceeded with a party of police, who being fired upon from the houses, he read the Riot Act. A party of the 43rd M. N. I. fired into the houses, which were subsequently entered and arms and prisoners taken therefrom. At Telok Ayer an attempt was made to fire the wooden houses in that neighbourhood, but the incendiaries were captured. In Circular-road, at about 7 o'clock, a Hokien Chinese was picked up by the special patrols; his belly was ripped open and his bowels were protruding—this man was carried to the hospital and died shortly afterwards. Some desultory firing took place from some of the houses in town, but no casualty resulted.

On Wednesday morning there was a meeting of the Magistrates and the leading members of the Tsin-chew and Hokien tribes. The leading Chinese present promised to exert themselves, and throughout the middle of the day a better feeling was displayed by the town residents. In the country there was much disorder. It was suggested to traverse the island in different directions, and with this view the steamer Hooghly was despatched to Changhae, landing parties at different points en route to act in unison with others who marched by land. One party proceeded to Gaylang, where they found houses had been destroyed and other dwellings were being fired—the Chinese dispersed wherever the party appeared; they then proceeded in the direction of Buddoh, to where some stockades were reported to be erected. After crossing the jungle some Chinese were met, and a smart fire opened on them, by which about a dozen were killed and many more wounded. The party under Colonel Cameron proceeded direct to Buddoh, and then marched two miles beyond that place, where they found a newly constructed stockade, on the top of the hill, and placed across the road. The building was a large one, capable of containing at least 500 men; from its commanding position, if vigorously defended, there would have been great loss of life, but happily the miscreants had not time to complete the erection, and were on the point of taking their meals, when the sudden appearance of Colonel Cameron on horseback, at the head of his force, created the utmost consternation in the rebel camp. The Chinese were armed, but fled into the jungle. The troops fired; two men were observed crawling away, apparently wounded, and four were made prisoners. The stockade was destroyed, and the whole of the buildings fired.

On Thursday there was a large party of armed Chinese in the Bukit Timah-road and at Ah Geet's house. A party of military arrived, upon which the Chinese fled. Arms being found in the house, and its appearance indicating that it was the head-quarters of the rioters in the district, the house was destroyed, and more than 20 prisoners were carried to the police. In the evening, between six and seven o'clock, an affair took place which threatened to rekindle the expiring embers. A Bugis man ran amok in Boat Quay and the lower part of Circular-road, wounding no less than six Chinese—two, it is feared, mortally; he then jumped into the Canal and concealed himself under Purvis's-bridge. The consternation amongst the Chinese words fail us to describe, and it was some time before they could be persuaded to return to their homes, or satisfied that the amok was not got up to create disorder. The Bugis man was repeatedly called upon to surrender himself, but he refused and said he would rather die

than yield himself up; as he was armed with a kris in each hand it was justly feared that if he reached the shore additional victims would fall by his hand. The police were then ordered to fire; many shots were fired but did not touch him; he then ran along the bed of the canal (in which there was not more than four feet of water at the time) as far as fronting Synagogue-street, where he was overpowered and carried off to the police-office dangerously wounded on the head, arms and body—he died about three hours afterwards. Before his death he repeatedly stated that he was induced to run amok as he believed that men had been employed to kill him by one Inchee Bujal, to whom he owed three dollars. Inchee Bujal was sent for and confronted with the Bugis; the latter repeated what he had previously mentioned. Inchee Bujal stated that the man was in his employ, and had absconded, taking with him a sampan and spear; the man admitted this to be correct, but still persisted in expressing his belief that Inchee Bujal had ordered people to kill him, apparently for no other reason than because Inchee Bujal is the head man of the Bugis people resident here! !

On Friday morning, in town, the shops were not opened, and there was manifestly a bad feeling existing between the Tsin-chew and the Hokien people. It would appear that some ill-disposed persons industriously circulated reports connected with the amok of the previous evening, with the view of making it appear that the Bugis man had been employed by the Hokien tribe to kill those of the Tsin-chew—forgetting the improbability of a Bugis being able to distinguish one class from the other. On inquiry, it turned out that men of both tribes were amongst the wounded.

In the country districts a few murders were committed; here and there bangsalls were plundered and destroyed, but these were confined to one or two quarters. At Siglap, all was quiet until one, p.m., when a large body of armed Chinese moved from Sirangoon in the direction of Siglap; on their way they killed three Malays who were peacefully employed in their own gardens, and this circumstance exasperated the feelings of the Malay population, causing the utmost excitement. Shots were soon heard, and some scouts reported that about 1,000 armed Chinese were close at hand, on their way to burn the Malay houses at Siglap. The troops were turned out and halted near the convict lines. About an hour afterwards an armed party of Chinese passed in front of Dr. Little's (Arthur's Seat), with, it is believed, the design of firing the village: a party was sent in pursuit, but the Chinese fled into the jungle.

On Saturday the 13th, all was quiet in town, and the shops open as usual. More than 29 junks sailed away for China. At the rear of Government Hill the body of a Chinese was found on the road-side, literally hacked to pieces, reported to have been committed by some Hokien fishermen. Several isolated murders were committed in the rural districts, and after mid-day five bangsalls at Tanglin were fired, and destroyed. Justice Harrison and a party proceeded to the spot. In one house was concealed a number of Chinese and a quantity of arms and stolen property; twenty-three men were taken into custody, and part of them, and some of the property found can be identified by the Towkays whose houses were destroyed. Later in the day a house near the end of the hill range at Mount Faber was set on fire, but the miscreants bolted off into the jungle before assistance arrived. At night the Tsin-Chew people destroyed the house at Tangling out of which the twenty-three prisoners were taken, but did no more mischief.

Sunday the 14th all was peaceable in town, and most of the shops were open.

Captain Rodgers, of the United States steamer, which vessel arrived here on Sunday the 7th instant, kindly offered an armed body of 80 men to assist the executive in quelling the disturbances, or in protecting property. Although the services of Captain Rodgers were not deemed necessary, we record with pleasure an offer dictated by the kindest feelings.

It will be satisfactory to parties at a distance to know that the large amount of property in the hands of our merchants, contained in godowns in Commercial-square, has not been, nor is it now in peril. The godowns of the merchants are well protected by the shipping, and are closely watched by men specially employed for the purpose. The Oriental Bank, since the 6th instant, has been guarded by a party of Sepoys of the 43rd M. N. I.

It is next to impossible to estimate the number of persons killed and wounded during the disturbances. At least one hundred Chinese have been shot dead or hacked to pieces: probably double that number have been assassinated. On one morning there were four bodies in the dead-house, next day nine more, until at length the numbers so increased that orders were given to inter the bodies wherever found. The Chinese rioters used their best exertions to carry off their killed and wounded. The Hospital was crowded with inmates, wounded. Neither age nor sex have been excepted from the serial murders perpetrated chiefly in the broad noon-of-day.

More than 500 persons are in custody charged with participation in one or more of the scenes we have described and we believe there is an intention to proceed at once with a judicial inquiry, so as to dispose of the prisoners and relieve the jails, now overcrowded.