

## THE CHINESE INSURRECTION IN BORNEO.

THE accounts received by the last mail give a gloomy picture of the position of affairs in the East. The feelings of hostility excited in the breasts of the Chinese are not confined to those who have felt the weight of our resentment in Canton. In the outlying settlements, wherever the race has found a home, we hear of secret plottings, of insurrectionary movements, of fierce attacks, and sanguinary reprisals. The prejudices and animosity of a whole people have been aroused; and though there can be no doubt respecting the issue of the impending conflict, complete success will only be achieved after a sacrifice of human life too appalling to contemplate.

Sir James Brooke, the enterprising Governor of Sarawak, has been amongst the first to experience the fruits of our mismanagement. The seat of his Government has been the scene of a formidable insurrection, and he himself was for a time in imminent risk of being captured. Considerable discontent had existed for some time in this settlement: its cause was attributed to the occurrence which has taken place in the mother country, but local circumstances combined to swell the disaffection. What these were does not very clearly appear; but they must have been known to the Governor. Intimations of the disposition of the Chinese reached him, but they do not seem to have induced him to exercise that caution the circumstances of the case required. The Chinese were allowed to plan their undertakings without interruption; and the authorities, at the last moment, were completely taken by surprise. At midnight, on the 14th of February last, Sarawak was suddenly attacked, all the commanding positions secured, and the measures of the insurgents were carried out with such dexterity, that the English residents were incapacitated from offering any resistance. Sir James Brooke had barely time to escape from his house, and only saved himself by plunging into the river, and swimming down it, to a Malay village which stood upon the other side. The Government houses were burnt down, and one or two persons fell victims to the fury of the assailants, although it is but justice to state, that only those supposed to be connected with the Government were the objects of their pursuit.

We know, from his past exploits, that Sir James Brooke has no scruple about wreaking wholesale retribution upon his enemies, and he prepared accordingly to take a terrible revenge upon the disturbers of the settlement. Having got together some Malays, he returned to the attack, drove out the Chinese from the town, and destroyed all their establishments in the island, excepting one; while a thousand poor creatures, the majority of whom must have been women and children, were sacrificed in this wild exercise of retributive justice. The accounts we have received are too imperfect to allow us to judge of the necessity of this extreme display of power, nor do we hear what effect it has produced upon the spirit of the survivors. Where so little precaution, however, was taken to prevent an outbreak, the danger must have been great to have justified such severe retaliation. Whether it will have the required effect of ensuring the tranquillity of the settlement, the future alone can reveal.

The frightful disproportion of loss, which was the result of this broil, characterises all our encounters with the Chinese: War with them in consequence assumes an aspect of cruelty, which deprives victory of all its glory. It becomes on our part a mere exhibition of power of vengeance, which fails to command respect, and which is only productive of a

deeper hatred and a more unrelenting animosity. Had a milder and wiser policy than that which this country has pursued been adopted from the first, in our dealings with this people, there is no reason to suppose that we should have failed to gain access to their confidence, or have been unable to turn recent events to our advantage, by laying the foundation of a good understanding for the future. But our officials, in their communications with a peculiarly sensitive race, have invariably assumed a haughty, domineering demeanour; and when unjust demands have been refused, they have been ruthlessly enforced with the most reckless disregard of the sanctity of human life. In the difficulties which are now rising up to impede our progress, and in the inglorious triumph which awaits us in the event of continued resistance—in the perpetual failure that has attended every ill-directed effort to conciliate the good-will of our antagonists, we can almost discern the infliction of a deserved punishment for the injustice perpetrated in the last war, and the long encouragement the Government of this country has given to the iniquities of the opium trade. Our steady persistence in this illegal and demoralising traffic has excited against us the loathing and detestation of the Chinese Government, and sealed up the door by which we might have gained the favour of the more enlightened of the population. By it a system of smuggling has been perpetrated with all its concomitant lawlessness and vice, which the authorities have found themselves unable to put down. It has occasioned constant strife between those anxious to enforce the law, and those who, by their corrupt dealings, would gain by its infraction; which has all been laid, and rightly, at our door. It has checked the demand for our manufactures. It has disturbed the internal trade of the country, and it has fortified the Chinese in their determination not to open their ports to our commerce. And above all, according to the united testimony of those who have attempted to introduce the truths of Christianity into the Empire, it has proved their chief and only insuperable obstacle.

With the exception of a few who are committed to a false and debasing theory of political economy, our foremost Statesmen and philanthropists have all joined in condemning this vile trade; but the power of gain has prevailed over higher and better principles, and the minds of the timid have been alarmed by the threatened derangement of our Indian system of finance which would follow upon its abolition. And thus, the relations of this country with China have been kept in a constant state of antagonism. Distrust, suspicion, and fear have been generated on the one side; and a contempt, breaking out into occasional acts of tyranny, has been nurtured on the other. And now, to enforce demands unjust in their origin, as were those which preceded the opium war, we are to have recourse again to a formidable military demonstration, and by massacre and bloodshed to compel submission, and restore an apparent peace. It is impossible in this way to gain the gratitude or the friendship of this people. The flag which is hailed elsewhere as the sign of freedom, in the Chinese waters is pointed at as the symbol of unbounded arrogance and the most cruel tyranny. It is deeply to be regretted that our policy should have led to such a result. There are unmistakable indications that a new era is about to dawn upon the empire of China. It has witnessed the commencement of a political revolution, and a yet mightier change—one of belief and opinion—has already been inaugurated. The country must, ere long, shake off the bondage of centuries, and freely enter into friendly relations with the other great sections of the human family. We might have been the first to avail ourselves of the results of this great change, and have acquired an influence over the flexible minds of this singular people, which would have contributed to the lasting benefit both of ourselves and of them. As it is, we have only succeeded in arousing their suspicion and dislike. We have incurred the odium—others will step forward to inherit the good-will.