

RUNNING AMOKS.

Like other countries inhabited by Malays and Bugis, Singapore is subjected occasionally to the dangerous practice of amok running. In apparent obedience to some sudden impulse, a Malay, or Bugis, will arm himself with two large kris or daggers, one in each hand, and rushing from his house along generally the most crowded street in the neighbourhood stab at random all who come in his way. As many as fifteen persons have been killed or seriously wounded, and many others slightly hurt, by one of those amok runners before he was slain, but the killed always bear a small proportion to the wounded, as the strokes of the infatuated man fall promiscuously, and are ill-directed. As soon as an amok runner makes his appearance, a warning cry is raised and carried on in advance of him all along the street. On hearing this cry a general rush into the houses is made of all the women and children, and of all the men who are not armed. No attempt is made to capture the man alive, but he becomes a mark for the musket, spear, or kris, of every man who can obtain a favourable opportunity for attack. He ceases to be viewed as human, and is hunted down like a wild beast, yet it is surprising how long he will escape the death which is aimed at him from every side. Some of these unfortunate wretches have run the gauntlet of nearly a mile of street that was up in arms against them, and have temporarily evaded destruction, some for hours, and others for days. But the end is inevitable, they refuse to be captured, and are ultimately shot down and stabbed. The first instance of running amok in Singapore occurred more than forty years ago, and Colonel Farquhar, then resident, narrowly escaped becoming a victim. It was in the time when the residency bungalows stood along the beach, where the esplanade is now, and the man was descried coming tearing down within the pallsade that enclosed them, brandishing a weapon in each hand. The cry of alarm was raised, and Colonel Farquhar, who was at dinner at the time, ran out to learn the cause. He just got out as the man was rushing past, and received a deep flesh cut on the shoulder; in an instant afterwards, however, the infatuated wretch was run through the body by the Sepoy guard on watch close by. At the time of the Chinese riots, about ten years ago, an amok was run by a Bugis, who made almost miraculous escapes from death before he was captured. The town was under guard at the time, the streets being patrolled by the troops and the volunteers, and fortunately few of the inhabitants were abroad. Towards evening the man was seen by his friends, with whom he had lived quietly, to arm himself and leave the house. A few moments after-

wards he had commenced his work, and was rushing madly along one of the busiest streets. Many shots were fired at him both by the troops and volunteers, and repeated attempts made to arrest his progress; but though badly wounded, and bleeding profusely, he reached the side of the river alive. A large force was now after him, and it was thought that his escape was impossible. It was getting dusk, however, and the man throwing away one of his swords, placed the other between his teeth, and plunged into the water. Some of those in pursuit got into the boats which lay around, and gave chase, while others blazed away from the banks; but the man, who kept swimming up the river under water, only appearing now and then to take breath, evaded all attempts to take or shoot him and disappeared. An hour afterwards a dark slimy object was seen to creep from one of the small muddy canals in the upper part of the town. Those around went up to it, and as they approached recognised the form to be that of a man evidently in great pain. No sooner, however, did the man see that he was watched than he started up, brandished his kris, and made a rush towards them; but his strength failed him, and in a moment afterwards he lay stretched powerless on the ground. On examination the man was found to be the late amok runner, and was conveyed to the hospital, where he died the same night.—*Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India, by John Cameron, Esq., F.R.G.S.*