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THE ATCHINESE EXPEDITION.

THE DISASTROUS REPULSE which the Dutch have suffered at the hands of the Atchinese has naturally directed public attention to the scene of the disaster. Atchin, Achin, or Acheen, as it is variously spelled, is the northern extremity of the Island of Sumatra. Of Sumatra in general, and of Atchin in particular, but little is known to Europe. These huge islands which strew the ocean between Australia and Asia, like the relics of a continent which has gone to ruin, are but partially explored by Europeans. Borneo, where RAJAH BROOKE ruled over the pirates of Sarawak; Celebes, haunt of cannibals and kidnappers; Papua, or New Guinea, whose vast interior has never been seen by the eye of civilised man; and Sumatra, the scene of this unfortunate expedition, are all objects more or less of mystery to us. Java is the best known of all these islands; and even Java, according to the wondering narratives of recent visitors, resembles nothing which we know of in the old world or the new—a land of mystery and of unearthliness, more akin to the wonderland revealed by the "Arabian Nights" than the sober realities of the nineteenth century. In this company of mammoth islands Holland has predominance and power. The Dutch East India Company is in a small harsh way to Java and Sumatra what our East India Company was to the splendid Empire which they wrested from the heirs of the Great Mogul. These Dutchmen at Batavia—the Calcutta of their India—rule with an iron rod over millions of men, whom they govern as shepherds govern sheep, for the sake of their fleece. MYNHEER does not hold the "gorgeous Eastern fee," but he holds a corner of it, and he finds the fee remunerates him for the trouble. The Dutch make their colonies pay. We are sometimes inclined to blush when we read the records of English Rule in India, yet our conduct to our Eastern subjects is, and has been, that of unmixed philanthropy, compared with the method in which the Netherlander has managed his Oriental farm. Java is the chief possession of Holland; but she has authority over considerable districts in the Island of Sumatra. It is a very short time since we ceded to the Dutch the titular supremacy of that Island, in return for her settlements on the West Coast of Africa. Sumatra lies so close to Java that it is not to be wondered at that the owners of that land of spices should wish to establish their supremacy over the whole of the adjacent island, which stretches good seven hundred miles from the Straits of Sunda to the Bay of Bengal. The Northern end of Sumatra forms what is designated the Empire of Atchin, the capital of which, the city of Atchin, stands upon the most northerly point of the island. The route to Hong Kong, by Point de Galle, passes the city of Atchin immediately before it threads the Straits of Malacca, en route

for Singapore. Against the Empire of Atchin, the Dutch resolved to make war. In the East, the collision of European and Asiatic always evolves sufficient causes of disagreement to excuse any number of appeals to the sword. Naturally enough, the Dutch have an excellent excuse for levying war upon the Atchinese. They declare that their enemies are slave traders, pirates, kidnappers, and plunderers; and that they were maintaining armaments which are a menace to their neighbours. To punish the Atchinese for these enormous crimes, the Dutch Governor-General despatched a force of 5,000 men, with the breech-loaders and artillery, which are the most popular instructors of modern civilisation. The body was reinforced by a couple of battalions and more artillery. They landed and bivouacked on the shore. As soon as they mustered their forces the Dutch officers led their soldiers against two earthworks, which were promptly taken. A stronghold named Craton was the next point of attack. The Atchinese held it in force. It is lamentable to learn that these barbarians had so far been made partakers in our civilisation as to possess artillery of great power, firearms and ammunition. Nothing daunted by the display of their enemies' strength, the Dutch attempted to storm their stronghold. A severe contest ensued. Scarcely had it commenced before the General of the attacking forces was slain. It was but the beginning of disasters. The Atchinese, after killing the commander, repulsed his troops. The Dutch were defeated. Five hundred of their soldiers were left wounded or dead on the field of battle. The rest were driven back to the shore, where they had bivouacked on landing. Emboldened by success, the Atchinese attacked the invader's camp, and laid in leaguer around the stockades, behind which their enemies were lying. So disastrous was the defeat, so crushing the blow thus administered to the Dutch, that they have abandoned the expedition. The troops are to be taken on board again, the camp on the coast evacuated, and the Atchinese are to be left alone—for a time. In the autumn the expedition, strengthened in numbers and wiser by the experience gained in disaster, will again leave Batavia, and the whole force of the Dutch will be hurled against the Empire of Atchin. In the meantime Dutch cruisers will watch the coast.

Such is the story of the expedition which is now on its way back to the colony of Java. Brave men though the Atchinese may be, the finest of the Malay race that peoples that volcano-scarred island, they can hardly avoid the doom which awaits them. The blow which they have administered to the prestige of the Dutch—a blow so grievous that it has been said at the Hague that it has destroyed the authority of Holland in the East—has been too severe to be forgiven or forgotten. Holland must wash out the stain in blood, and erase with fire and sword the record of her humiliation. It is sad to say such things; it is sadder still to do them; but unless they are done the authority of the Dutch, not only in Sumatra, but in Java, will be so much weakened that its continuance will be a matter of doubt. The monsoon affords a convenient excuse for withdrawal at present; after the monsoon, there is no alternative but to begin again. The expense will be ruinous, but it must be incurred. Better lose the rent of the East Indian estate for a dozen years than lose the estate itself.