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ACHEEN.

THERE seems to be a good deal of misapprehension about the nature and amount of the difficulties with which the Dutch Government will probably have to contend in prosecuting military operations against Acheen. The contest is commonly represented as one of the ordinary cast between civilization and barbarism, and likened to the campaigns of the United States army against ferocious Indians. But the Achinees, though by themselves a small nation, and formidable only if they find allies in other parts of the island of Sumatra, are nevertheless likely to prove (if old stories are true) no contemptible enemies. They have an ancient civilization, such as it is; have contended, with various fortunes, but not without distinction, not only against their barbarous neighbours, but against the Portuguese and the Dutch. At one time they possessed dependencies on the peninsula of Malacca; and "frequently," says an old traveller, "besieged the Portuguese in the city of that name, they having been always declared enemies of that nation." They were always "renowned for their courage and conduct" beyond all other neighbouring nations, and are "bold and expert navigators." They became early converts to the Mahomedan religion, and are zealous supporters of it to this day. They have been long accustomed to dealings, both military and pacific, with Europeans. Two of the pieces of ordnance which the Sultan does or did exhibit before his palace gate were sent him by James I. of England. Their Queen in 1663 (for, Mahomedans as they are, they retain much of the Malay respect for the prerogatives of the sex) "had an inclination to be married to a Dutchman, but the Council of Batavia, for weighty reasons, would not consent to the match." Another curious custom, which the old Dutch travellers describe, was connected with this principle of reverence for the fair sex. "A woman sits (in Council) at the feet of the King, to whom he communicates whatever ideas occur to him during the deliberations, she conveys them to an eunuch near her, by whom they are transmitted to an officer, who proclaims them aloud to the whole assembly." It must, however, be owned that the narratives of the old voyagers make them out to have been addicted to savage and cruel practices, beyond even other tribes of that ferocious Malay Archipelago. Burnings, mutilations, and trampling by elephants are related in their quaint volumes with hideous particularity, no doubt accommodated to the popular taste by exaggeration. One of the Achinese customs is thus described by Gemelli Carreri, on the authority of one Cartinho, who had been "up the island":—"They play at dice for one another's lives. When the game is done the winner binds the loser, and stays all day for some one to buy him, when if none comes he kills and eats him!"