

A NEST OF MALAY PIRATES.

An occasional correspondent of the *Times* writes as follows, under date of Straits Settlements, February 26:—A happy man is Hadji Duramen, the owner of the *scochi*, and as he leans over the gunwale of his boat, he calculates the result of his venture. "The betel, the cocoa nuts, and the tobacco—have I not sold them well, and have I not the money snugly on board; and then there is that sum of 2,000 dollars, on which, be assured, I shall charge a fair per centage when I shall have safely delivered it in Malacca. I knew that I was prudent in paying my dues at Langhat itself, for yonder stockade, perched on the top of the hill overlooking the river, is it not Rajah Yacoob's? and—well, I will say naught of evil against one of the Sultan's own sons, but ugly stories of murder and piracy are rife regarding him, and owing to this unlucky fall of wind I am in his power until the tide shall have turned. Well, well, my dues are paid, and he can hardly meddle with me." And he turns round and bids his crew of six men to rest, for they will have to work the boat all night. The remainder of our tale is told best by one of the crew himself. "At dark," he said, "I saw two boats push off, manned by Malays, from the stockade, and they came alongside and asked for rice." "That shall ye have, and plenty," answered Hadji Duramen; "whereupon they straightway fired into us, and then boarded us, armed with their spears and knives. Half the crew jumped overboard, but even this availed them not, for the pirates speared them in the water, and how I myself managed to slip over the side unobserved I cannot tell. The shore was only some 200 yards distant, but I dared not swim, and hung on to the stern of our boat trembling lest I should be discovered, and hearing the groans of my friends as they were despatched in cold blood by the assassins. After about an hour I plucked up courage, and, drifting with the stream, managed to get to the rickety pier that projects into the river just below the stockade. My blood froze as I saw one of the piratical boats come towards me, until it was only some ten yards distant, and a tall man dressed in yellow came out on the end of the pier, and I recognized in him a Malay chief. 'Have you killed them all?' was his first question. 'All but one, my lord,' replied one of the ruffians, 'and he cannot escape far; and the booty, my lord, is a rich one, for the 2,000 dollars that you wot of were on board as you expected.' And I held my breath for fear that I should be discovered. But they saw me not, and when they had gone I swam to a boat lying close by and implored protection; and being well armed they cared not for Rajah Yacoob and his minions, and I managed to make my way to Malacca, and there told how my friend the Hadji, a British subject, had been murdered, and all his crew with him, save me only; and some three weeks later I was standing on the bridge at Malacca, when I saw two boats come in, which resembled mightily those evil craft which had attacked us at the mouth of the Jufra, and I waited until the men should land, and the police aided me and arrested their crews, and I am ready to swear that the men now in the dock are the very pirates who committed the foul deed." It is now the 14th of January, 1874, and the scene is transferred a few miles further down the coast of the Malay peninsula to the lighthouse at Cape Rachado. It is just dark, and the keeper of the lighthouse, having trimmed his lamps, is thinking over the numerous piratical attacks of which he has heard, and wishing that, with all these evil tales of pirates abroad, he was better provided with revolvers and rifles. For to-day he has received his pay and that of his assistants, and although their pittances individually are but small, he does not like the careful inquiries that were made of his men yesterday by the evil-looking crew in yon fishing boat. True, they said they thought of taking service in the lighthouse themselves

but . . . And just then Lindal Fernandez screams out, "Help, master! help! they are stabbing me," and a number of dusky forms flit out of the jungle and make a rush for the lighthouse. But friend Lucas, the keeper of the lighthouse, is an old man-of-war's man and runs to meet them, as if he had a boat's crew at his back, a pistol in one hand and a cutlass in the other, and the cowardly miscreants, daunted by this bold front, escape into the jungle and are no more heard of. Surely this wholesale butchery of British subjects—these treacherous attacks on British lighthouses—can be no longer tolerated. Petty Rajahs with hopelessly unintelligible names swarm over the land, each with his gang of adherents, levying black mail on the unhappy villagers, of which freebooters the three sons of the Sultan are the most unscrupulous. The Sultan is powerless to cope with his chaos, and resigns himself to opium; but the name of Tunku Dhya Udin, son-in-law of the Sultan and Viceroy of Salangore, perpetually recurs as endeavouring indefatigably to restore peace to his distracted country. Far from easy in his mind has the Sultan been since about Christmas time, and on the morning of the 7th of February, when he awakes from his opium dream, he finds the *Pluto* at his gates with Sir Andrew Clarke on board—Governor of the Straits Settlements—while anchored 100 yards down the stream is Her Majesty's ship *Frolic*, flying the flag of Vice-Admiral Shadwell; and again 200 yards further down is the *Midge*, and Tunku Dhya Udin is on board the *Midge*, to whom six years ago the Sultan gave his favourite daughter in marriage, making him Viceroy, with full powers to rule over the land which he himself is powerless to govern; but whom, because he well ruled and would not aid and abet the Sultan and his sons in their lawless acts, the Sultan tried to deprive of his power and refused to receive him—nay, encouraged his sons to fight against him. Not much time for deliberation now, for a boat shoves off from the *Pluto*, and a letter from the Governor is delivered to the Sultan, courteously requesting him to come on board. But this the wily old Malay will not do. "Receive the Governor, yes, as my dearest friend, and right glad am I that he has so far honoured my dominions as to pay them a visit; but go on board I will not—it is not a Malay custom"—and a Malay is as very punctilious about tradition as the proudest hidalgo of Spain. But Sir Andrew Clarke is firm; foresees, perhaps, that if the first point is yielded but meagre results will be reaped from his visit—will only so far waive his point, eventually to this extent, that the *Pluto* shall be warped close alongside the river bank so that the Sultan may easily come on board by a gangway, since he does not like to trust himself in ship's boats, and may bring as many of his retainers on board as he chooses. This compromise was eventually agreed to, and at five a.m. in the afternoon, the Sultan, with a faint heart, leaves his stockade, protected from the sun by his huge yellow silk umbrella, the bearer of which doubtless regrets that he holds an office which will to-day lead him into danger, inasmuch as he must follow his master wherever he goes, but consoled by the fact that he will not be the only victim, since the Sultan is followed by all his retainers, numbering, say a hundred, and all armed with knives, and some with spears as well. One more trial has to be undergone, for just as the trembling potentate sets out a tall figure dressed in yellow, whom we have seen standing on the pier at Jufra one dark night last December, prostrates himself before the Sultan. "Oh, father, father, you go to certain captivity, and perhaps death!" Once more the Sultan hesitates—turns back even—but fortunately Mr. Braddell, the Attorney-General of Singapore, is at his elbow, and with difficulty persuades him that no treachery is intended. Even to the last, however, the old Sultan dreads foul play, and will not go on board until some 50 of his armed followers have preceded him. A wizened old man with plaintive brown eyes and a restless manner, that well betokens how ill at ease he is. The courteous reception given him by Sir Andrew Clarke and Admiral Shadwell somewhat reassures him, and glad to get

on shore on any terms, he gladly appoints Wednesday, the 9th, at noon, for a return visit, at which those various subjects which "his friend" the Governor has come about, are discussed. Prompt and decisive are the measures at that interview, "Reconciliation with Tunku Dhya Udin—he is on board the *Midge*, and can be conducted into your presence at once." And is so conducted, and embraced by the Sultan with the greatest warmth, in the presence of all the Chiefs, with repeated assurances that the estrangement has been caused by sheer misunderstanding. "Summary justice on the pirates arrested at Malacca, and that adjudged by your own Courts;" and the Sultan consents to appoint a Court of Inquiry, consisting of three of his Chiefs as members, to administer justice in this matter; and, to show how thorough is the reconciliation that has been effected, shall not his own son-in-law, his well-trusted Viceroy, be the president thereof? Compensation for the relatives of the murdered men, and an assurance that in future piracy will be suppressed in Salangore, are readily promised by the Sultan, engagements which it is thought advisable to have put down in writing on the next day lest the Sultan's memory should fail him; and on the 11th the Governor and admiral weigh anchor, and the Sultan hopes to get back to his opium, and be at leisure to evolve schemes for evading the solemn promises which he has given. But Tunku Dhya Udin flinches not, and, dreading any delay in the matter, assembles his Court of Inquiry straightway. For three days is the evidence sifted and the defence of the prisoners considered, and on the third day seven out of the nine pirates are doomed to death. What evidence could be more conclusive? One of the miscreants turned Queen's evidence and substantiated in all material points the evidence given by the survivor of the massacre. The *scochi* itself was found concealed among the bushes in one of the creeks of the river, and a water barrel belonging to ill-fated Hadji Duramen, at the stockade off which he anchored on that unlucky day. Our friend in the yellow dress once more makes his appearance on the scene, for that awkward conversation that he held on the pier at the foot of the stockade was referred to on the trial, and, brother-in-law or not, Tunku Dhya Udin summons him to appear before the Court, and be sure is loath to release him, though he needs must for want of sufficient evidence. To-day, the 16th of February, the pirates are to suffer death. It was but yesterday that sentence was pronounced, but, at nine o'clock a guard of marines and bluejackets are posted in the stockade lest a rescue be attempted, and at ten seven men met a richly deserved doom at the hands of the Malay executioner; and the stern Tunku set up a post on the spot where they died, and called the name of the place Qualla Pergonok, or "Place of Expiation," that the memory thereof may not fade away, and all that night there was wailing and weeping of women at Langhat for those they would never see more.