

THE TROUBLE IN PERAK.

THE startling news that the British Resident in Perak had been murdered by the Malays, that a British force was on its way to punish the assassins, that one officer has been killed and two wounded, and that the Rajahs, headed by ex-Sultan ISMAIL, had besieged the Residency and were trying to expel the British troops, has probably occasioned our readers some slight uneasiness. The intelligence, however, is by no means so alarming as it appears on the surface. Perak is a small independent Malay State, lying to the south of Penang, governed, nominally, by its own Sultans, but, in reality, controlled by the advice of a British Resident. The whole population of Perak is less than that of the county of Durham, and its capital can be approached by gunboats, so that there is not the slightest reason for fearing any disastrous complication or costly war on account of the fate of poor Mr BIRCH. His murderers can be punished without difficulty, and the whole trouble may be ended before the week is out. In order to prevent its repetition, our Residency should be garrisoned with trusty troops, and Perak should become in reality, if not in name, as much a Straits settlement as Penang.

It was Sir ANDREW CLARKE, one of the ablest governors the Malay Peninsula has ever seen, who sent Mr BIRCH to Perak; but in so doing he merely complied with the earnest request of its SULTAN. Nearly eighteen months ago, the Province of Perak was convulsed by intestine feuds. Larut, a dependency of Perak's, lying close to the frontier of our Province of Wellesley, under the rule of a tributary of the SULTAN's, known as the Muntri of Larut, had for two years been desolated by an unsparring blood feud, waged between two sets of Chinese emigrants for the possession of a rich tin mine. These Chinese factions carried their disputes to such a length that they built war junks, with which they committed numberless acts of piracy all along the coast, and on

land resorted to wholesale brigandage. Larut is so near to Wellesley that our authorities found the peace of that settlement seriously disturbed by the civil war which raged just over their frontier. British gunboats were fired at by Chinese pirates, and a band of brigands actually attacked one of our police stations. To add to the complication, the throne of Perak was in the possession of a usurper. The rightful SULTAN was struggling to regain his authority, and the war of succession in Perak occasioned almost as much anarchy as the contest for the disputed tin mine in Larut. The Muntri of the latter State supported one Chinese faction, the rightful SULTAN of Perak supported the other, and for two years the Malays and Chinese fought and wrangled, importing war junks and fighting men from Canton, and making the fair province one horrible scene of bloodshed and desolation. Finding that the fighting and anarchy in Perak was threatening the peace of our own settlements, rendering the good government of our Chinese subjects impossible, and seriously interfering with the security of our shipping, Sir ANDREW CLARKE determined to use his good offices with the disputants, in order to compose the quarrel which had occasioned such lamentable consequences. By a judicious display of force, he induced the contending Chinese factions to submit their dispute to his arbitration, and bound over the head men to keep the peace in the sum of £10,000. This agreement has been honourably observed. The Chinese dismantled their stockades, burnt their war junks, and set to work to develop the industrial resources of the Larut. In a short time the province, so long distracted by bloody feuds, became a very Eden of peace and fertility, and our countrymen in the Malay Peninsula were anticipating great things from the rapid development of the enormous metallic wealth of the country. The Chinese feud, however, was complicated by a dispute as to the possession of the throne of Perak, and this Sir ANDREW CLARKE

proceeded to settle immediately after binding over the Chinese to submit to his arbitration. Rajah MUDA, the rightful Sultan of Perak, to whose support the British Government was pledged by treaty, was placed on the throne. The usurping Sultan, Rajah BANDAHARA ISMAIL, was deposed, but he was allowed the title of Ex-Sultan, and an estate was set apart for him, and a pension was granted to him from the revenues of Perak. A slip of territory, twenty-five miles long by five broad, was handed over to the British province of Wellesley, in accordance with an old treaty made in 1826. The clauses of the treaty relating to the appointment of Residents state that "the SULTAN must receive and provide a suitable residence for a British officer, to be called Resident, who shall be accredited to his Court, and whose advice must be asked and acted upon on all questions other than those touching Malay religion and custom." One Resident had to be stationed at Perak, and an assistant at Larut. It is also specified that the cost of these Residents, with their establishments, is to be a first charge on the revenues of Perak, and that the collection and control of all revenues, and the general administration of the country, are to be regulated under the advice of the Residents. To this treaty, both Rajah MUDA and the ex-Sultan, Rajah ISMAIL, affixed their signatures, together with several other Malay Chiefs. Up till the other day all went well. Mr BIRCH was appointed Resident, and under his auspices Perak became as orderly as a British Province. Its boundless mineral wealth and its invaluable forests began, after the lapse of ages, to be utilized by the industrious adventurer. The wealth of Perak excited such dreams of riches that, as a correspondent expressed it, it seemed as if "El Dorado had been found at last." Suddenly we learned that Mr BIRCH had been treacherously murdered while in his bath, and that troops had been despatched to Perak to punish his assassins. Later telegrams throw but little light upon the reasons for this act of treachery; but from the fact that ex-Sultan ISMAIL is reported as leading the opposition to the British, it is probable that the old usurper is at the bottom of the whole affair. The real Sultan, Rajah MUDA, is never mentioned. It appears as if the old holder of the Throne of Perak had resolved upon making a desperate effort to regain the position he lost in the spring of 1874, and that he had commenced operations by assassinating the representative of the arbitrator whose award gave the throne to his rival. There need be no anxiety as to the result. If the ex-Sultan is the instigator of the rising, he will be put out of the way of doing any more mischief, and steps will be taken to render impossible the recurrence of a similar tragedy. The recent lamentable events, although sad for the relatives of our gallant officers, will do good to Perak in securing its virtual annexation to the British Empire.