

OUTBREAK AMONGST THE MALAYS.

SEVERE FIGHTING.

AN ENGLISH OFFICER KILLED.

A telegram from Penang of November 9 says:—"The body of Mr. Birch has been found, tied to a tree. All this side of the Malay peninsula is greatly excited, and a general outbreak is feared. Governor Jervois is at Perak. Troops have been telegraphed for from Hong Kong. The *Modeste*, man-of-war, from Labuan, and the *Thistle* and *Fly*, gunboats, have arrived near Perak. There are about 400 troops at Perak."

The following despatch was issued on Tuesday by the Colonial office:—

"Telegraphic intelligence has been received from Singapore that the besieged British Residency on the Perak River was relieved on Saturday the 6th by Captain Innes. On Sunday, a force composed of a detachment of the 10th regiment, the armed police, and the Sepoys of the resident's guard attacked a stockade further up the river, and near the scene of Mr. Birch's murder. The attack failed, Captain Innes was killed, Lieutenants Elliott and Booth and eight men of the 10th wounded, and one reported missing. The governor was on his way to Batu Rabi, a point on the river half-way between the sea and the British Residency. Orders have been given for the immediate despatch of reinforcements from Hong Kong and Calcutta."

A despatch from Penang of Wednesday says:—"The Rajah of Lilla has ordered the districts of Larut, Salangore, and Perak to take up arms. Johore and Queda are friendly. The troops have retired to Baturabet, Sultan Abdoolah's residence, ten miles below the Residency. The Kingdome and Egeria gunboats are expected from China. One thousand men with artillery are on their way from India. The Malays are ejecting the Chinese inhabitants who are friendly to the English, and are recruiting their forces in the outlying districts. A religious war is expected."

The 80th Regiment, under orders to move from Hong Kong to Singapore, will, it is said, proceed at once to Malay, to join the force under Sir William Jervois. Artillery will be sent from India.

Orders have been given for the *Modeste* (corvette), *Ringdove* (gun-vessel), *Egeria* (sloop), *Thistle* (gun-vessel), and *Fly* (gun-vessel), to muster at Singapore without delay. It is probable that other vessels on the China station will also be ordered to Singapore.

In accordance with instructions from the Horse Guards received at Aldershot on Thursday reinforcements of all ranks of the 1st Battalions of the 6th and 9th Foot are held in readiness to proceed, *via* Suez Canal, to join the service companies of their battalions in India.

The intelligence of Mr. Birch's death has been followed by news from the Straits Settlements, which may contain the seeds of another "little war." As yet, however, little is known of the outbreak of Perak, except that it has cost us the life of Mr. Birch and an unsatisfactory conflict between a mere handful of British troops and the Malays. Whether the Malays have only broken out in a momentary spasm of that savage frenzy peculiar to their race we must wait patiently to see. Troops were ordered up from Singapore immediately on the receipt of the startling news from Penang, and 400 men are now at Perak, supported by a British man-of-war from Labuan and two gunboats. Further reinforcements have been summoned from Hong Kong. The Government of India, too, would not hesitate to give instant help in case of an emergency, and the naval squadron assembled at Bombay to do honour to the Prince of Wales would be immediately available, if necessity should arise for more serious service. The Malay Peninsula is thinly peopled, and the petty princes who bear rule outside the limits of the British settlements are too weak and too divided to threaten any prolonged resistance to European forces. Nevertheless, the fortunes of the Dutch in the north of Sumatra, where the Atchinese are still unsubdued, have not been of a kind to make us ambitious of the gains or glories of a Malayan quarrel. These settlements are among the oldest European stations in the Eastern Seas; the Portuguese held them first, but Holland displaced Portugal as the mistress of those seas, and in each interchange of power the settlements on the Straits of Malacca fell to the ascendant nation. But the stations on the mainland have in modern days become obscure when compared with the quicker growth of the two islands, Penang and Singa-

pore, which were rescued from Malayan pirates, the former by a private adventurer in the last century, the latter by Sir Stamford Raffles some sixty years ago. The trade of these islands is considerable, and that of Singapore must always be great, standing, as does "the little shop,"—such is said to be the signification of the name,—in the gateway between the Indian and China Seas. But, besides, we retain on the mainland of the Peninsula two "provinces"—Wellesley, opposite Penang, and attached to that lieutenant-governorship, and Malacca, two hundred and forty miles to the south at the narrowest point of the Straits. The former is held by us subject to a tribute to the Rajah of Quedah, who is himself a vassal of the Siamese kingdom. But south of Wellesley Province and surrounding Malacca are several small states—Perak, Salangore, Pahang, and Johore—claiming complete independence, and most of them in alliance with the British Crown. We have treaties of commerce with all of them, and have defined by treaty the boundary questions which gave at one time not a little trouble on the borders of Malacca. The kingdom of Perak lies along the coast between the southern frontier of Wellesley Province and the northern frontier of Malacca, and its capital, on the river of the same name, enjoys the presence of a British resident. Down to 1867, the Malayan settlements, which had been a part of the dominions of the East India Company, were attached to the Presidency of Bengal, and probably the character of the relations between the British and their native neighbours still retains in some measure the impress of Indian policy.

It appears that Mr. Birch, who was the Colonial Secretary at Singapore, had temporarily undertaken the duties of resident at the court of the Sultan of Perak. On the 3rd instant news reached Penang that he had been treacherously assassinated at Passir Sala, between Rhotu and Durian, on the Perak river. He was attacked while in his bath, and, of course, unarmed, and with him was killed his interpreter, several others of his suite being wounded or missing. As the telegrams published in another column inform us, Mr. Birch's body has been found tied to a tree and in a mutilated condition. The obvious suggestion of a personal motive—private revenge or individual fanaticism—for a crime so black in its treason is not consistent with subsequent events at Perak. Whether it be true or not that, as was suspected at Penang, all the native rajahs were accomplices in the outrage, it is certain that the completion of the bloody deed gave the signal for a rising. "At Passir Sala," as was rumoured last week, "the Malays were making great preparations for resistance," and at Perak itself they had besieged the British residency, where the survivors of Mr. Birch's staff had taken refuge. The Sultan himself was reported "to be collecting large forces, with the object of attempting to expel the British." Sir William Jervois was not deterred by these alarming rumours from proceeding to the scene of the disturbance with the man-of-war and two gunboats; but the troops he has brought up from Singapore and those which have been sent down from Penang will hardly be sufficient to restore tranquillity, if Sultan Ismail is determined to persevere in his enterprise. It is possible that the Mahomedans of the Malay Peninsula may have caught, as we know their kinsmen in Sumatra did, the flame of the Mussulman revival. In that case, encouraged by the sight of the Dutch reverses in Atchin, the Malays of the Peninsula may cherish the hope of driving the English out of Malacca. If such be the character of the outbreak at Perak, it may give us not a little trouble.

Captain William Innes, assistant colonial engineer, Straits Settlements, obtained his commission as lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers in 1858, and served for some time at Weymouth. He became captain in 1871, and soon afterwards was placed on the temporary reserve list and proceeded to China. The late Mr. Birch had occupied several important positions in the East.