

THE LATE CAPTAIN INNES, R.E.

THERE seems to be no reason to doubt that Captain Innes, who so gallantly relieved the British Residency at Perak on the 6th inst., and who fell in an attack on a Malay stockade on the Perak river, is a gallant and accomplished young officer belonging to this county—viz., the eldest son of Colonel Innes of Learney. All the information which has reached the War Office leads to this conclusion; and there is but one feeling of sympathy with Colonel Innes and his family in this great loss, and of regret for the loss to the public service of an officer of remarkable merit. We do not speak of any local or partial estimate of Captain Innes' character and attainments, but of the testimony borne in letters from his brother officers in the London journals. His devotion to his profession seems to have led him wherever experience was to be found, at whatever risk. He was equally well known as a laborious student and a brave soldier. That he was the one is sufficiently proved by the responsible offices which he filled. That he was the other seems to be too well shown by the circumstances attending his death. And we do not think that any one can read the following simple and unadorned narrative of Captain Innes' career—from the pen of a gentleman who could well estimate his character—without a feeling that our small wars are costly indeed, if they cost nothing more than the lives of such men.

Captain Innes, Royal Engineers, who was killed in the engagement with the Malays on the 7th inst., was the eldest son of Col. Innes of Learney, in this county. He was 34 years of age at the time of his death. In 1853, at 12 years of age, he was placed at the Ordnance School of Chesham, at that time the Government preparatory school for Woolwich, and in 1855, the entrance to the Ordnance Services, by nomination, being then abolished, he passed into the Royal Military Academy by the first open competitive examination. After a three years' course of study he left the Academy with distinction as First Cadet of the year, and elected to take his commission in the Royal Engineers.

From a very early period of life he had shewn great aptitude for science, and his character and attainments at the Military Academy led to his being selected, very soon after he obtained his commission, for employment on the works in progress on the Fortifications of Dover. He continued there till January, 1862, when the alarm of war with the United States on account of the "Trent" affair occasioned the immediate despatch of troops to Canada. The navigation of the St Lawrence being closed at that season, the route *via* St John's, New Brunswick, had to be adopted, and Lieut. Innes, being attached to the 4th Coy. Royal Engineers, which formed part of the force sent out, on reaching St John's, was immediately employed in the military survey of the United States frontier and of the line of communication between St John's and Lower Canada.

On the settlement of the dispute with the United States, Lieut. Innes was sent to Halifax, and for five years was occupied in the construction of large works for the defence of that harbour. During the winter months, when the rigour of the climate necessitated the suspension of the works, he obtained leave, and repeatedly made journeys through the United States and Canada. Being ever on the outlook for opportunities of acquiring information, and anxious to observe the operations of the war at that time raging in the United States, he applied to the authorities at Washington for permission to visit the northern army. Meeting with a refusal, and being resolved not to be balked, he cautiously approached the lines of the contending armies, and watched for an opportunity of passing the outposts. At length, favoured by a dark night, and having bribed a guide, he ran through the pickets and patrols near Harper's Ferry, and succeeded with much risk and difficulty in reaching Richmond.

He had provided himself with introductions to officers of rank in the Confederate Forces, and was well received in Virginia, enjoying opportunities of seeing their army in the field, visiting Charleston and Fort Sumter, and studying whatever interested him in a professional point of view. His return to the northern side was again attended with considerable hardship, having to cross the Potomac, and make his way on foot to Baltimore through the patrols of the northern army, at the risk of capture and detention.

On his return home from Halifax, in 1867, the results of his observations on some professional topics of interest were communicated in a paper in the Transactions of the United States Institution, which attracted attention. He was soon again employed on the fortifications in progress at Spithead and Portland, until in 1869, being applied for by Sir W. Gordon, he was appointed as his A.D.C. on his assuming the office of Inspector-General of Fortifications.

He had thus, from his passing the threshold of the profession, on quitting the R.M. Academy, been for ten years continuously occupied in the highest department of his branch of the service, and when his appointment as A.D.C. to the Inspector-General of Fortifications was sadly terminated by Sir W. Gordon's death, his eager temperament led him to look for larger and more comprehensive work than could be found for him at that time at home. For some time he filled the appointment of District Engineer Officer at Shoeburyness, and, as was his invariable habit, interested himself keenly and worked with all his might at whatever he had in hand; but, having in 1871 attained the rank of Captain, he eventually, in 1872, accepted the appointment of Assistant Colonial Engineer in the Straits Settlements, and went out to Singapore.

During the three following years he was continuously and assiduously occupied in public works, surveys, and administration in these Colonies. While employed at Singapore he had formed an intimate friendship with Mr Birch, the Colonial Secretary, and when at a later period Captain Innes' duties led to his removal to Penang, and Mr Birch came to be appointed Resident at the native State of Perak, which is about a day's sail from Penang, their intimacy was renewed, and they occasionally met and exchanged views on the prospects of the attempt to regulate the government of the native States.

During this period Captain Innes had more than once volunteered his services and taken part in operations for the suppression of piracy and outrages which arose from the distracted condition of the native States. And his duties led him to traverse in his surveys a great deal of the native territory.

A few weeks before Mr Birch's assassination, Sir W. Jervois made an official tour, as governor, through the district of Perak, in which Captain Innes attended him. One object of the journey was to assemble the native chiefs, and to attempt to reconcile them to the necessary conditions of a settled Government, but they kept aloof, and manifested a suspicious and unfriendly disposition, and Captain Innes, in his last letter, seemed to entertain a presentiment that all was not right.

The details of the sad catastrophe are not yet fully in our possession. Captain Innes possibly volunteered for service, and was directed to take command of the armed police and the detachment of troops sent to relieve the Residency, and to seize those implicated in Mr Birch's assassination. No doubt the outraged feelings of a friend were mingled with the fearless and devoted sense of duty which always animated him, and circumstances of which we have no knowledge may have made self-sacrifice imperative. A statement issued by the Colonial Office says that, on the 6th November, a force commanded by Captain Innes assailed a stockaded position in the village in which Mr Birch was murdered, and that after an hour and a-half's fighting the troops charged and carried the stockade, and that it was in this charge that Captain Innes was killed, and two other officers wounded. By his untimely end, the service has lost an officer whose varied experience in his profession fitted him for the most important employments, and the numerous friends whom he had gained, wherever his services led him, will mourn the loss of a very talented and amiable man.