

THE MALAY RISING.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

ISLAND OF PENANG, DEC. 18.

It may be assumed, judging from the course of recent events, that the murder of the Hon. J. W. W. Birch was premeditated and political. Since the evening that the Colonial steamer *Pluto* arrived in Penang Harbour, on the 3rd Nov., bringing the sad news of his assassination, events have succeeded one another quickly; and the murder, which might have resolved itself into one of personal jealousy or enmity, has since necessitated the despatch of two large armed forces. The promptness with which the Lieut.-Governor of Penang acted on receipt of the intelligence was worthy of all praise. At 11 p.m. on the 3rd Nov. it was decided to despatch on the following morning, at six o'clock, an armed force of 60 men of the 10th Regiment, with police, &c. There was little sleep for the men that night—one of continuous tropical downpour—none for those who had to equip the party and supply them with provisions, &c.

At Durian S'batang, on the Perak River, the *Pluto* anchored to relieve the Residency. To push forward at once was the all-absorbing desire. As many Malay boats as could be secured were filled with our men, and the ascent of the river began. The cheery laugh and the joke passed round, although the discomforts of the night were beyond realisation. The Malay boats are trees hollowed out and shrunk with fire, the gunwale being about six inches above the water. On account of the rapidity of the current and the numerous shoals and sandbanks which occur between Durian S'batang and Banda Bahru (the Residency), the boats are propelled by "polers." After twelve hours' "poling," although the distance covered was not more than eight miles, and through a night of tropical rain, against which there was no protection, the Residency was reached and relieved. On the following morning (Sunday, 7th November), the party proceeded towards Passir Sala, the scene of Mr. Birch's murder. The repulse at this stockade and the numerous casualties speak for themselves. The retreat was sounded, and, through dense jungle, the wounded were carried or walked for two miles and a half to the boats, beneath a burning sun. The Residency was reached in the afternoon. The news of the repulse was sent to Penang, and reinforcements from China and Calcutta called for, the Residency being meanwhile intrenched, and small detachments of artillery and the 10th Regiment, from Singapore, sent forward to strengthen their numbers. It would now be well to look at the extent and character of the country we are occupying. Perak is no insignificant State. It stretches along the west coast of the Malay Peninsula for about 100 miles, and its average width may be taken at 50 miles. On the north it is bounded by the Krian River, on the south by the Birnam River; on the east it is separated from Triganau and Pahang by mountains, varying in height from 2,000 feet to

5,000 feet, and also by dense jungle. The soil is said to be extremely fertile, and capable, under the influences of the mild climate, of producing coffee, sugar, indigo, and other tropical plants. So prolific is the soil said to be, that sugar will grow to an enormous size by merely turning up the soil rudely, and inserting the cuttings. The Perak River is supposed to rise in Siamese territory, near the source of the Mooda River, the northern boundary of Province Wellesley. It flows due south, with many tortuous windings, for about 100 miles as far as Durian S'batang—the anchorage for gunboats—from which point it runs almost west for about 43 miles into the Straits of Malacca. At Qualla Kanga the river is about 280 yards wide; northwards beyond that it becomes rocky and narrow. This part of the river affords the sportsman abundance of buffaloes. Near Banda Bahru the river is exactly 280 yards wide, and as it runs south increases greatly in width, till near the mouth it attains a width of two or three miles. The soil on the banks is chiefly alluvial, with substrata of clays of a variety of shades placed over sand. The vegetable mould is in most places which are not inundated by the river of good depth. The Perak river has been the great highway for the transport of the Perak land forces.

Towards the end of November Penang harbour had assumed an unwonted appearance. Three large transports had arrived, or were in course of arrival. Gunboats entered the harbour and were at once despatched to swell the ranks of the Naval Brigade, or to blockade the coast between the Krian and the Birnam rivers. At one time there were lying in the harbour nearly 1,000 men; soon they were en route to the Larut river, the plan being to operate from the north as well as from the south. On the 30th November the headquarters of the 3rd Regiment, the Buffs, landed at Tellok Kartang, on the Larut River, and proceeded by three marches to Qualla Kanga, a distance of 27 miles. On 7th December Brigadier-General Ross and Staff, with a half-battery of artillery, 250 of the 3rd Buffs, and 100 men of the 1st Regiment of Ghoorikas, with followers, landed at Tellok Kartang, and proceeded by two marches to Bukit Gautang. Here the want of coolies necessitated much troublesome delay, the transport promised by the Resident, by direction of the colonial authorities, not being forthcoming. The difficulties that had to be contended against in securing them were enormous, desertions into the jungle reducing a tolerably good array of coolies at the start into a straggling, disorderly lot of Chinamen at the end of a march. News having arrived of complications at Sungie Ujong, near Malacca, a portion of the force intended to operate in Larut was hastily despatched in No. 3 transport to Malacca. The Malacca field force consisted of about 620 of all arms, including artillery, the 3rd Regiment, the Buffs, and 1st Ghoorikas. This number was to strengthen the detachment of the 10th Regiment at Sungie Ujong. Before the reinforcements could reach them, however, an engagement had taken place, resulting in 13 being killed and 10 wounded, two of the former belonging to the 10th Regiment. The stockade attacked was situated near Rassa, and was of

great strength, and most resolutely defended by about 300 Malays. It was eventually taken by a brilliant bayonet charge, led by Lieutenants Hintman and Peyton. The Malays resisted till the last, and then fled into the jungle. Twenty-one of their number were found inside dead. This portion of the Peninsula, as elsewhere, is dense jungle and forest, with paths along which troops can pass only in single file. The only highway is the Larut River, and that with many difficulties, for only portions of the country lying between the coast and the scene of operations.

Meanwhile the forces on the Perak River, at Banda Bahru, had been strongly reinforced by 300 of the 80th Regiment, from Hong-Kong, by further detachments of the artillery from Penang and Singapore, and by the formation of a naval brigade of 100 men from her Majesty's ships *Modeste*, *Thistle*, and *Fly*, under the command of Captain Buller, R.N. The whole force consisting of about 650 men, as well as the Indian troops, were under the command of Major-General Colborne, C.B. Previous to the arrival of the Major-General Commanding a renewed attack had been made on Passir Sala, the scene of Mr. Birch's murder, and the spot where the first attack failed. Passir Sala was later occupied by a detachment under the command of Lieut. Patow. A sufficient number of flat-bottomed boats having been constructed, and towed up the river to Banda Bahru to convey the troops, with their ammunition, supplies, &c., a further forward movement was made by the Perak field forces on 5th December. The Control Department, with endless difficulties in regard to transport to contend against—the want of trained subordinates, the scarcity of labour and coolies—has performed its work admirably; and on the forward movement being decided, that department was able to provide, without hitch or danger to its depôt at Banda Bahru, a supply of sixteen days' field rations. The base for all supplies for the three forces in the field—numbering about 3,000, including followers—is the Control Reserve Depôt, Penang.

The column under General Colborne's command ascended the river at the rate of about seven miles a day. The troops were landed each night, and also the guns, and camps pitched in the dense forest and jungle land. The forward movement continued until the 13th December, no opposition being met with. On that date at 7 a.m. the column reached Blanja, where strong resistance had been anticipated. It was found, however, that ex-Sultan Ismail and Rajah Mahmood, of Salangore, were retreating before the troops, in fact had just left the place, and were on their way to Kinta, where the regalia is retained by ex-Sultan Ismail. The General promptly pressed forward, and at 2 o'clock in the afternoon his scouts came up with the rear-guard of the enemy, who immediately opened a heavy fire on our troops, Dr. Randall, Royal Artillery, being severely wounded in the upper portion of the left leg. The jungle path was very heavy, and the undergrowth and trees so dense that the greatest difficulty was experienced in bringing up the 24-pounder rocket tubes, and the 7-pounder guns. The bush was eventually cleared, and the column continued its march of about thirty miles through the jungle to Kinta.