

Achin Piracy.

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On the 23rd March, 1868, the British Schooner "Good Fortune" of 34 tons burthen, registered in Penang and belonging to Neou Tean How, sailed from Penang on a trading voyage with a cargo of piece goods for the North Coast of Sumatra as far as Acheen Head intending to call at Lho Seumawe to load cargo on the return voyage. During the night of the 26th April the schooner encountered bad weather, ran past Lho Seumawe and anchored at 2 a.m. on the morning of the 27th April off Kerti Creek about twelve miles to the eastward of Lho Seumawe. About three hours later three boats came alongside each manned with from fifteen to twenty Achinese who boarded the schooner and made the crew take to their boat, threatening to murder them if they did not do so. The Achinese then proceeded to plunder the vessel to the value of \$5,000 in money and goods and on leaving unshipped the schooner's rudder and either sank it or took on shore. The master of the schooner (Tean Boon Chuan) and the crew made for the shore and complained to the "Raja of Kerti Creek", one "Tungku Chee Malim" who threatened to confiscate the schooner as well as the cargo whereupon the Master and the crew returned on board their vessel with all speed and set sail for Lho Seumawe where a new rudder was obtained. The "Good Fortune" subsequently returned to Penang arriving on the evening of 14th May. (Cp. C.S.O. "P. R. Receipt" No. 785/1868).

After some delay the Government Steamer "Peiho" with the Acting Colonial Secretary, Captain Playfair, on board and H.M.S. "Perseus" (Commander C. E. Stevens, R.N., Senior Naval Officer, Straits Division of the China Station), with H.M.S. "Grasshopper" in company, proceeded to Sumatra for the purpose of investigating the outrage. (Cp. C.S.O. "P. R. Receipt No. 1017/68).

The appended copy of the report of proceedings of the expedition to Kerti (Cp. C.S.O. "P. R. Receipt No. 1301/1868) was written by Mr. D. F. A. Hervey who was the first Cadet to be appointed to the Straits Settlements Civil Service. Mr. Hervey was born in 1849, educated at Marlborough College and appointed to his cadetship on 24th May, 1867. He was appointed Chief Clerk and Interpreter to the Lieutenant-Governor of Penang in 1870 in which year he accompanied H.M.S. "Algerine" to enquire into various cases of piracy on the coast of Acheen. He accompanied Governor Sir Harry St. George Ord on many political expeditions to the Native States and in 1882 was appointed Resident Councillor, Malacca. His services were recognised by the award of a C.M.G., in 1892. He retired in 1893 and died in 1911.

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Colonial Secretariat, Singapore.

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Report of Proceedings.

About the middle of June I received a letter from the Acting Colonial Secretary informing me that he was about to go to Achin in the S.S. "Peiho," and that it was the Governor's wish I should accompany him. The expedition was to investigate a matter of plundering a schooner which had taken place at Kerty Creek on the coast of Achin in Sumatra: the "Perseus" and "Weasel" were also going in the expedition under the command of Captain Stevens. We were to have started the next day, but our departure was postponed, in expectation of the "Weasel's" arriving at Singapore to accompany the "Perseus" in the expedition. However after waiting a week or more, the Gunboat "Grasshopper" was taken in tow by the "Perseus" for Penang, June the 29th and the next day I joined Captain Playfair (Acting Colonial Secretary) in the "Peiho," and left Singapore for Penang about 1 p.m. Having had fair weather for two days, we reached Penang on Thursday July 2nd about 2½ p.m. I landed with Captain Playfair and he went to the Lieutenant-Governor's office, where we found Captain Stevens: they then entered into conversation with the Lieutenant-Governor, and requested him to get an interpreter, and to obtain witnesses to give evidence regarding the plunder of the schooner "Good Fortune" to obtain compensation for which was the object of the expedition. The Master Attendant having been applied to promised to bring forward the "serang" or navigator of the "Good Fortune" being the only witness he could procure, as the crew had all left Penang in the "Good Fortune" which had sailed some 10 days before upon another voyage to Telok Samawi, a port on the coast of Achin some 20 miles northwest of Diamond Point. Having agreed to meet and examine the witness in the office at 11 a.m. the next day, all left the office. All having repaired to the office at 11 a.m. the next day, and the witness being present, as well as the owner of the "Good Fortune". The Acting Colonial Secretary examined the witness, (the serang of the "Good Fortune") and the witness, stated nothing but what was confirmatory of the statement already made before the Master Attendant of Penang. The owner of the "Good Fortune" was next questioned as to the nature of his cargo, and as to whether there was any mark by which he could identify his property; he replied that the cargo was mostly piece goods of various kinds, and that he could identify his property by his chop, which he afterwards produced. After deliberating as to whether the evidence of this one witness could be held conclusive, Captain Stevens was inclined to think not, but on the Acting Colonial Secretary asking if they, being in possession of this evidence, and with the prospect, as soon as they reached Telok Samawi of obtaining ample evidence from the crew of the "Good Fortune", would be justified in declining to proceed with the matter any further, Captain Stevens decided in the negative, and then stated his intention of accompanying the Peiho as far as Diamond Point, and from thence

of turning off to Gighen, while the "Peiho" with the "Grasshopper" should make for "Telok Samawi", and obtain evidence from the crew of the "Good Fortune" concerning the outrage they complained of. We steamed from Penang early the next morning, (Saturday July 4th) and reached Diamond Point in company with the "Perseus," which soon discovered the "Grasshopper" lying at anchor, close in shore, awaiting our arrival, (she had been sent on ahead before reaching Penang, by Captain Stevens); the "Grasshopper" having begun to follow us, we steamed on for "Telok Samawi", but on our course we sighted a schooner, and Captain Stevens thinking she might be the "Good Fortune" made for her at once and we followed, but it was not the "Good Fortune", and Captain Stevens having first come on board the "Peiho" sent to the schooner for the Captain, and as soon as he was come, began to question him, (for he talked English very fairly) about "Kerty" and "Telok Samawi", and we learnt that the place his schooner was then lying off was "Kerty" Creek, which is a river with a bar in front, upon which, with the exception of a narrow channel, there is a considerable surf at all times, and it does not take much of a breeze to spread the surf right across this narrow channel; schooners of from 30 to 40 tons burthen can pass through this channel and up the river for a couple of miles. That night, Sunday July 5th, the "Perseus" steamed for Gighen, intending to return to us on Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday. The "Peiho" and the "Grasshopper" remained at anchor till Monday morning, when they steamed for "Telok Samawi", and after we had anchored some little while, a boat came off shore, containing the Raja's "Tambey" minister or adviser, who was a Kling man (as all men in that position seem to be in these countries) bringing the Raja's compliments who was then some distance off having a feast, and saying that he would on his own authority fire us a salute of 21 guns, for that the Raja had a great respect for the Queen of England, and after arranging about the time of our landing, he left the vessel, not however, before Captain Playfair had told him that the salute would be returned. Some time afterwards the "Telok Semawi" people began firing their salute, but at very long intervals, and when they had fired 16 guns, they ceased altogether. Some while afterwards the Kling Tambey returned on board to accompany us on shore, and explained with regard to their salute, that they had only fired 16 guns, wishing to reserve the last 5 for the occasion of our landing, when they did fire them from a gunboat belonging to the Raja, and in very quick succession. After rowing a mile or so, (the "Peiho" returned the salute just then) we had to land on the sailor's backs, our boats having stuck in the sand, Mr. Prickett landed with us, and we all followed the "Tambey" to the place where the Raja was awaiting our arrival; we had to scramble up two steps or benches leading under a low roof to the room in which were seated, the Raja, the younger brother of the Sultan of Achin, and two or three young

relations of the Raja; having shaken hands with them, we took the seats that were offered us, 2 of them chairs, while I sat on a sofa of planks, covered with chintz, on the left hand of the Raja. Captain Playfair after a few preliminary enquiries conversed with the Raja through the "Tambey" asking him if he had any witnesses of the plundering of the "Good Fortune" by the Kerty people (unfortunately the "Good Fortune" had sailed from "Telok Samawi" about 7 p.m. the evening before, so that we had to do whatever we best could without the evidence of her crew, as if we pursued her, the chances of our overtaking her would be very small indeed, she having sailed with a good breeze to help her on, and being only a sailing vessel, her course could not be reckoned very certainly) (for the Raja had written to a Chinese merchant in Penang saying that some of his fishermen had witnessed the plundering of the vessel) to Captain Playfair's question the Raja made reply that there was only a boy of 13 years old, for the fishermen referred to had merely seen the empty condition of the "Good Fortune" after being plundered, and not the plunderers engaged in relieving her of her cargo. The Acting Colonial Secretary further enquired of the Raja concerning a brig called "Victoria" which a Chinese merchant at Penang had temporarily lent to an Achinese "Panglima" or chief, and this chief having on his arrival at the coast of Achin exchanged the British Flag for an Achinese flag, the vessel "Victoria" then under his charge was captured by the Raja of Telok Samawi, with whom the Panglima was at enmity, and although there was no war actually waged between them, yet whenever they could get opportunity, they seized one another's vessels, and did one another all possible injury. This was the Raja's excuse for taking the above mentioned brig, and the Acting Colonial Secretary thought that it was well-founded. The brig was, at the time of our stay at "Telok Samawi" lying a wreck just off the low spit of land which runs along in front of "Telok Samawi". We left the Raja for a time to get a little fresh air, for the assembly was very hot and close, being crowded with natives, and the room very low, so we walked up and down the street of wretched shops, and then proceeded to have a look at the fort, which they said had been built by the present Raja's grandfather, but is now in a very dilapidated condition, there being one old rusty cannon which they are afraid to fire lest it should burst. After seeing this old fort, we returned to bid the Raja goodbye, and then walked off to our boats. The "Tambey" had told us before that the "Telok Samawi" people were in a few days going to war with the Kerty people, and that though the army of the latter numbered 20,000, and that of the former only 16,000, yet it did not matter, for the "Telok Samawians" always had their wits about them, while the Kertians were great simpletons. The reason assigned by the Raja for this war being entered upon was that the Raja of Kerty was determined to be altogether independent of the Sultan of Achin, and that therefore he (the Raja of Telok Samawi)

had been instructed by the Sultan to bring back the Raja of Kerty to his proper allegiance. The first thing next morning we steamed across the bay (20 miles along the coast from Telok Samawi) to Diamond Point and dropped anchor first opposite Kerty, and having obtained a guide, (the serang of the schooner we had mistaken for "Good Fortune") we made for the mouth of the river, sounding all the way; when we got just inside the river, we landed to the left, and the Acting Colonial Secretary addressed a certain Panglima who could understand Malay, told him that a man-of-war was coming and desired him to inform the Raja that the Captain of the man-of-war wished to meet the Raja the next day: we then returned to our boats, and having taken some soundings in the river returned to our respective vessels. The next day we went in the boats right up the river (which for the last mile and more is very winding and troublesome) to the "Pakan" or Bazaar, close to which dwells the Raja; we landed, and were led to the same kind of audience room as we had met with at Telok Samawi, in front of it were two or three small cannon which we used as steps to mount the benches and here we met two Kling "Tambeys" with whom the Acting Colonial Secretary entered into conversation in Hindostani while awaiting the presence of the Raja who after some twenty minutes or so made his appearance, and with great humility seated himself on a ledge below that on which we were seated. Captain Playfair then entered into conversation with the Raja through one of the "Tambeys" and we learnt that the Raja never thought of being independent, but acknowledged the supremacy of the Sultan, and paid tribute to him; while he also stated the ambition of the Raja of Telok Samawi to be the cause of the war, for he wished Kerty to acknowledge him as a kind of second Sultan, which he (the Raja of Kerty) would certainly never do. Then on enquiring about the matter of the "Good Fortune" the Raja said he knew nothing about it, beyond the fact of the crew of the "Good Fortune" having applied for assistance in stress of weather to the Kerty people on the coast, and their application had been granted on condition of their paying their "assistants" \$595 which they did; to this Captain Playfair replied, that we had no faith whatever in that account of the matter, but believed in the truth of what we had stated, besides all we wanted was that the Raja should himself investigate the matter, and punish such as were guilty. The Raja said Oh no! he couldn't find them, but we might search for them and in default of finding them might do what we liked to the country. (The Raja of this place, as well as that of Telok Samawi informed us that the punishment for all kinds of stealing, robbery, plundering, was death by decapitation). But Captain Playfair again said that the Government had no wish to do that, but only to see the Raja himself execute justice upon such as were guilty in any way; and after explaining to the Raja what was expected of one in his position, together with much insisting and perseverance Captain Playfair at last induced the Raja

to promise investigation of the matter on his own part, and also that the result of that investigation should be shown to us the next day. But the next day when we went to the Raja, we found that all the inquiry he had made (or pretended to make) was to write to the Panglima of the coast concerning the matter then under discussion, in answer to which he received (or at any rate said he received) a letter giving the same version of the story as the Raja had given us the day before, and which letter (was most probably composed by the Raja or his "Tambej") was read out loud to us before the Raja. Captain Playfair however explained to the Raja his view of the matter, and after considerable discussion, the latter offered to pay \$595 and deliver up the Panglima of the coast who had superintended the plundering of the schooner: having definitely made the arrangement, that the Raja should appear on the morrow himself at the mouth of the river with the money and the man ready to be handed over to us, we made the best of our way on board through the surf. On the morrow, when we had reached the mouth of the river and landed, there were no signs whatever of the Raja, but only a few natives loitering about; shortly after somebody came and informed us that the Raja did not intend to appear (at which we were rather disgusted) but was sending two of his chief men to inform us of his intentions concerning the matter in hand; what did these men do when they came up to us, but propose a cargo of betel-nut ("which", said they, "we can load very quickly" viz. in 6 days) instead of the \$595, because they had so few dollars in the place, they said, and when that was not to be thought of, they tried how piece goods would do: but Captain Playfair said "No, that wouldn't do, the Raja must fulfil his promise, and make his payment in just such kind as he had said he would, the day before": (if our evidence had been stronger, we would, push our demands further after such behaviour, but in such circumstances as we were then under, all that could be done was to hold our own, and not flinch a hair's breadth).* Part of their argument against payment was, their Panglima had sworn to his version of the matter, "and" said they "yours has not" (i.e. Chinaman and serang). Captain Playfair said that ours had at Penang, moreover if the Raja had not faith in our statements, our men could have sworn in his presence the day before if he had only mentioned his wish, he concluded by saying that if they wished to avoid serious consequences they had better send the money and the man on board at 9 a.m. the next morning, and having pretty plainly shown our disgust at their treatment of us we returned on board. Before going on board the "Peiho" we went

*After finding talk with these men useless, Captain Playfair determined to go up the river and find the king himself to settle the matter with him. (Mr. Johnson was with us this time and the day before Captain Stevens' 1st lieutenant). But the Raja was not there, and we returned to the mouth of the river, notwithstanding many entreaties to wait 1 hour for the Raja on reaching the mouth of the river Capt. Playfair gave the warning mentioned below and we then returned on board.

on board the "Perseus" to inform Captain Stevens of the state of affairs; it was thought advisable to let these ignorant people see what kind of ammunition a man-of-war had and that we were not to be cheated and trifled with; so a shell or two was fired dropping into the sea, and one or two shot. The next morning we were just about to start in the boats when a boat came out from Kerty, bringing a man, the elder brother of the Panglima (for the Panglima had disappeared) and the \$595. So we went on board the "Perseus" and informed the Captain, who received the money and the prisoner, and sent the "Tambeys" and chief men to their boat but not without first telling them that they had got off very easily and that they must take care another time how they treated British subject or his property. Having thus brought the matter to a conclusion, we steamed away just at noon the same day, being Saturday July 11th, and reached Singapore Tuesday July 14th after an absence of a fortnight.†

All these Achinese people wear some kind of weapon, some two at a time: the weapons are 1st the *Klewang*, a large, broad-bladed heavy knife, some 2 feet long or nearly so; this weapon is broader in the blade at the extremity than at the part near the handle which is made of buffalo horn, wood, or ivory (which latter comes from the inland and mountainous country); with this weapon it is not difficult to deal a very heavy blow.

2nd. The *Renchong*, a smaller and decidedly less formidable weapon than the foregoing one, but of somewhat similar make.

3rd. The *sekin panjang* or *pisau panjang*, which approaches the *Klewang* in size, but is merely as its name denotes, a long knife.

4th. The *sekin kecil* or *pisau kecil* which is the smallest of all, and the most pointed, the meaning of its name is "small knife". Notwithstanding all these weapons, these people don't seem to be particularly plucky, but rather to prefer getting a quiet cut from behind at a man. Neither is their country an interesting one, in a general way though I think the inland parts would prove

†The conduct of the Raja of Kerty in this matter proves that he felt the truth of the accusation made against him or some of his people; notwithstanding which he tried to shew that his acts were consistent with the story he advanced to account for the payment of a large sum of money. Curiously enough just before Captain Playfair had entered upon the matter at all, one of the "Tambeys" began referring to it, though none of us had in any way yet mentioned the matter; this rather tends to shew, that he was somewhat nervous as to the object of our arrival, and possibly had a tender conscience, though why such should be his frame of mind, if payment merely had been received for giving the crew of the "Good Fortune" timely assistance in stress of weather, I am sure I don't know.

very interesting for, and fully worthy of, an expedition. The Raja of Kerty is a very insignificant looking man; while his future enemy the Raja of "Telok Samawi" is a tolerably stout, well fed, comfortable looking sort of man. There are two Rajas in Kerty, the one we had to deal with was the younger of the two, the business man, while the elder one we never got a glimpse of; I suppose he lives in quiet, enjoying the fruits of his brother's labour, not that there is very much labour to be got through. Kerty is really more to the N.W. or W. than it is placed in the chart, and nearer to Telok Samawi. The population of Kerty was stated to be 100,000 but I daresay half that would not be underrating it very much, though to all appearance it was decidedly more populous than Telok Samawi.

Report of expedition to Achin, to obtain compensation for robbery of a schooner called the "Good Fortune" off Kerty Creek on the coast of Achin.

(Sgd.) D. F. A. HERVEY, *Cadet*,

July 14th, 1868.

The Honourable,
The Acting Colonial Secretary.