

try, have their teeth rubbed down quite even with the gums; others have them formed in points, and some file off no more than the outer coat and extremities, in order that they may the better receive and retain the jetty blackness, with which they almost universally adorn them. The black used on these occasions is the empyreumatic oil of the coco-nut shell. When this is not applied, the filing does not, by destroying what we term the enamel, diminish the whiteness of the teeth. The great men sometimes set theirs in gold, by casing, with a plate of that metal, the under row; and this ornament, contrasted with the black dye, has, by lamp or candle light, a very splendid effect. It is sometimes indented to the shape of the teeth, but more usually quite plain. They do not remove it either to eat or sleep.

At the age of about eight or nine, they bore the ears of the female children; which is a ceremony that must necessarily precede their marriage. This they call *betenday*, as they call filing their teeth *bedabong*; both which operations are regarded in the family, as the occasions of a festival. They do not here, as in some of the adjacent islands, (of *Neas* in particular) increase the aperture of the ear to a monstrous size, so as in many instances to be large enough to admit the hand, the lower parts being stretched till they touch the shoulders. Their ear-rings are mostly of gold filagree, fastening, not with a clasp, but in the manner of studs.

Difference in Character between the Malays, and other Sumatrans; from the same Author.

THE Malay and native Sumatran differ more in the features of their mind than in those of their person. Although we know not that this island, in the revolutions of human grandeur, ever made a distinguished figure in the history of the world, (for the Achenese, though powerful in the sixteenth century, were very low in point of civilization) yet the Malay inhabitants have an appearance of degeneracy, and this renders their character totally different from that which we conceive of a savage, however justly their ferocious spirit of plunder on the eastern coast, may have drawn upon them that name. They seem rather to be sinking into obscurity, though with opportunities of improvement, than emerging from thence, to a state of civil or political importance. They retain a strong share of pride, but not of that laudable kind which restrains men from the commission of mean and fraudulent actions. They possess much low cunning and plausible duplicity, and know how to dissemble the strongest passions and most inveterate antipathy, beneath the utmost composure of features, till the opportunity of gratifying their resentment offers. Veracity, gratitude, and integrity, are not to be found in the list of their virtues, and their minds are almost totally strangers to the sentiments of honour and infamy. They are jealous and vindictive. Their courage is desultory,

sultory, the effect of a momentary enthusiasm, which enables them to perform deeds of incredible desperation; but they are strangers to that steady magnanimity, that cool heroic resolution in battle, which constitutes in our idea the perfection of this quality, and renders it a virtue*. Yet it must be observed, that from an apathy almost paradoxical, they suffer under sentence of death, in cases where no indignant passions could operate to buoy up the mind to a contempt of punishment, with astonishing composure and indifference; uttering little more on these occasions, than a proverbial saying, common among them, expressive of the inevitability of fate—"apoo boolee boot?" To this stoicism, their belief in predestination, and very imperfect idea of a future, eternal existence, doubtless contribute.

Some writer has remarked, that a resemblance is usually found, between the disposition and qualities of the beasts proper to any country, and those of the indigenous inhabitants of the human species, where an intercourse with foreigners has not destroyed the genuineness of their character. The Malay may be compared to the buffalo and the tiger. In his domestic state, he is indolent, stubborn, and voluptuous as the former, and in his adventurous life, he is insidious, blood-thirsty, and rapacious as the latter. Thus the Arab is said to resemble his camel, and the placid Gentoo his cow.

The original Sumatran, though he partakes in some degree of the Malay vices, and partly from the contagion of example, possesses many exclusive virtues; but they are more properly of the negative than the positive kind. He is mild, peaceable, and forbearing, unless his anger be roused by violent provocation, when he is implacable in his resentments. He is temperate and sober, being equally abstemious in meat and drink. The diet of the natives is mostly vegetable; water is their only beverage; and though they will kill a fowl or a goat for a stranger, whom perhaps they never saw before, nor ever expect to see again, they are rarely guilty of that extravagance for themselves; not even at their festivals (*bimbang*), where there is a plenty of meat, do they eat much of any thing but rice. Their hospitality is extreme, and bounded by their ability alone. Their manners are simple; they are generally, except among the chiefs, devoid of the Malay cunning and chicane; yet endued with a quickness of apprehension, and on many occasions discovering a considerable degree of penetration and sagacity. In respect to women, they are remarkably continent, without any share of insensibility. They are modest; particularly guarded in their expressions; courteous in their behavior; grave in their deportment, being seldom or never excited to laughter; and patient to a great degree. On the other hand, they are litigious;

* In the history of the Portuguese wars in this part of the east, there appears some exception to this remark, and particularly in the character of *Lacjemma*, who was truly a great man, and most consummate warrior.

indolent;

C H A R A

Indolent; addicted to gaming; dishonest in their dealings with strangers, which they esteem no moral defect; suspicious; regardless of truth; mean in their transactions; servile; though cleanly in their persons, dirty in their apparel, which they never wash.

They are careless and improvident of the future, because their wants are few, for though poor, they are not necessitous; nature supplying with extraordinary facility, whatever she has made requisite for their existence. Science and the arts have not, by extending their views, contributed to enlarge the circle of their desires; and the various refinements of luxury, which in polished societies become necessities of life, are totally unknown to them*.
