
THE LITERARY EXAMINER.

The Eastern Seas; or, Voyages and Adventures in the Indian Archipelago, in 1832-33-34. By George Windsor Earl, M.R.A.S. Wm. H. Allen and Co.

A very interesting book—conveying a mass of curious and valuable information, in a clear, sensible, and unpretending style. Equal pleasure and instruction may be derived from it.

Mr Earl's route was varied and rich, and the reader retraces it, in his descriptions, with a striking reality. From Western Australia to Batavia, fanned by the way with the chilly air of what the ancient navigators romantically termed the "spicy gales of India,"—then passing on to Sourabaya, the capital of the eastern districts of Java, and, as Mr Earl points out, a harbour of unrecognized importance,—from this, making for the south coast of the island, and, in the course of a sea tour around it, touching at all the different ports of any interest, describing the scenery and graphically sketching the residents, whether in the shape of the new and motley settlers, English, Dutch, or Chinese, or in that of the old and barbarous native tribes,—afterwards returning to Batavia, and voyaging to Singapore, the interesting sea-port founded by Sir Stamford Raffles, whose memory Mr Earl found cherished by all the residents with an affectionate and grateful respect,—thence to Bangkok, in Siam, where the people appear to be singularly disagreeable,—from Siam down the east coast of the Malay peninsula, and back to Singapore,—from the latter place, charged with the conduct of a commercial speculation, to Borneo, where a singular and striking contrast presents itself in the Malay, Dutch, and Chinese colonies, dashed by occasional irruptions from the aborigines, the Dyaks of Borneo,—closing with a visit to the gold mines, and a sketch of the recent discoveries in the Borneo interior:—through all these varied and vivid scenes Mr Earl conducts us with a simplicity of narrative which is only less attractive than the sound and instructive views of colonial policy, whether in relation to the Dutch or English Governments, which he takes frequent opportunity of enforcing.

Our space is limited, but one or two short extracts will suffice to interest the reader. In an obscure settlement on the southern Javanese coast, Mr Earl witnessed the performance of a *wyang*, or native play. It took place on board a vessel in the harbour of Cali Pujang, to which crowds of the natives had flocked in an ecstasy of delight at the invitation of the captain—

"I went down to the main deck to witness the dramatic entertainment, being by virtue of my office admitted behind the scenes. A transparent screen of considerable dimensions was hung up to the beams, behind which a large lamp had been suspended. The puppets, about a hundred in number, were grotesque figures of men and women with dragons' heads and cloven feet, together with bulls and alligators, all most hideous to behold. They were about a foot high, cut out of pieces of buffalo hide, and painted and gilded, each having a piece of bamboo attached to it, by which it was stuck into a large plantain stem to be ready for use.

"The play consisted of a recitation of the adventures of one of the ancient Javanese princes, and upon each character being mentioned, the figure which represented it was held before the lamp, so that its shadow, thus thrown upon the transparent screen, became visible to the audience. The recitation was made in a dull, monotonous tone, but the speaker raised his voice occasionally when the adventures became particularly interesting. The audience, without the exception of a single individual, listened with intense interest to the narration, nothing attracting their attention from it for an instant. During the evening we had occasion for the butler, and after some difficulty the gunner succeeded in getting him on deck, but his mind was so occupied with the adventures of the prince while attacking the fiery buffalo, or while rescuing the princess from the jaws of the alligator, that we could not make him understand what we wanted; and I was eventually obliged to take the keys from him,