

EXPLORING EXPEDITION TO THE ASIATIC ARCHIPELAGO.

We last week stated that an expedition, undertaken by Mr. James Brooke, a well-known member of the Yacht Club, at his own risk and expense, has sailed from Plymouth for Singapore, for the purpose of exploring the Asiatic Archipelago. The following account, taken from the *Athenaeum* of the 13th October, gives a general outline of the objects of the expedition. It is but due to Mr. Brooke to mention that, although in this country his name is known only to science, in India he ranks high for other qualities. Mr. Brooke entered into life as an officer of the East India Company's service. He was on General Richard's staff during the Rungpore campaign, in 1825, three days before the fall of the city of Rungpore. Mr. Brooke was severely wounded, gallantly heading a charge of local cavalry against a strong body of Burmese infantry;—his conduct was warmly praised by the then Commander-in-Chief, Sir Edward Paget, in general orders. The severity of Mr. Brooke's wounds obliged him to resign the service and come to England, since which he has devoted his time, fortune, and talents to the pursuit of scientific knowledge. The following is the outline of his present attempt, which we doubt not will merit from his countrymen the praise it richly deserves:—

"It is strange that while the enterprising spirit of Englishmen and of the British Government have made such costly efforts in the hope of opening new channels of commerce, and for the purpose of geographical discovery and general science,—while expedition after expedition has been sent out in the hope of solving the mystery of the Arctic Seas, and for the survey of its barren shores, and adventurer after adventurer has been content to lay his bones to bleach on the burning sands of Africa, scarcely a voice has been heard directing attention to a field which offers itself with golden promise of advantage—the Asiatic Archipelago. We know scarcely any thing of the people of that vast region, or even of the geographical features of the country they inhabit; yet in the recorded judgment of the few persons who have had casual opportunities of forming an opinion on the subject, those islands present a boundless field for commercial enterprise, are rich beyond even the Americas in mineral wealth, and unrivalled in natural beauty. It is, therefore, with great satisfaction we announce that an English gentleman, Mr. Jas. Brooke, a well-known member of the Yacht Club, is about to adventure on this bold enterprise, and see how far individual exertion may be successful. Already we are indebted to this gentleman for an account of the Gulf and Island of Symi, printed in the last volume of the Transactions of the Geographical Society, and we are now happy to have it in our power to lay before our readers an outline of the proposed objects of the present expedition, from a report submitted to the same society. Mr. Brooke's own yacht, the *Royalist*, a fine schooner of 140 tons burthen, is now lying in the East India Export Dock;* she is equipped with all the necessary instruments for observation, and the means for collecting and preserving specimens of natural history, and is expected to sail in a week or ten days."

Mr. Brooke thus writes—

"I propose to make Singapore the head quarters of the expedition,—here the best local information can be obtained—interpreters procured, and every thing needful to facilitate the objects in view. The *Royalist* will probably reach Singapore in the month of February or March, 1839, at the latter end of the north-west, or rainy monsoon—this time, till the setting in of the south-east, or dry monsoon, will be occupied by gaining a general acquaintance with the natural history, trade of the settlement, and some knowledge of the Malay language. Many islands in the vicinity of Singapore, at present imperfectly known, will afford interesting occupation—the space between the Straits of Rhio, and those of Duryan—the island of Barbary, which, although laid down as one large island, is probably composed of small ones, divided by navigable streams. On the commencement of the healthy season I propose proceeding to Maltúdu Bay—this spot, as almost unknown, though a British possession, gives it a prior claim to attention.

The objects are thus stated:—"1. A general knowledge of the Bay, and all connected with its various points, headlands, &c. &c. 2. Inquiries for a settlement of Cochinese, reported, on Earl's authority, to be fixed in the vicinity of Bankoka; an intercourse to be opened with these. 3. The rivers which flow into the Bay to be minutely explored, and an attempt made to penetrate into the interior as far as the lake of Kíní Ballú. 4. To open a communication with the aborigines of the country. "I speak with great diffidence about penetrating into the interior of this country; for I am well aware of the insurmountable difficulties which the hard reality of Sin presents, which are previously overlooked and easily overcome in the smoothness of paper, or the luxury of a drawing-room. It is to be presumed, from the evidence of Sir Stamford Raffles and others, that the lake is not

far distant from the Bay; that the noble rivers flowing into the Bay communicate with the lake."

After stating, generally, the importance of gaining over the aborigines, by the utmost forbearance, and a liberality guided by prudence, Mr. Brooke shows the necessity of determining the somewhat vague opinions regarding the aboriginal inhabitants of the island of Borneo; their origin; the different tribes; the Diaks of the south; the Idaan of the north; the Kagins, a race little better than monkeys, existing in the lowest conceivable grade of humanity; their various religions; and to determine, satisfactorily, whether the Hindú religion, which yet survives at Bali and Lombok, was likewise extended to Borneo.

"To return, however, to the proceedings of the *Royalist*, I would remark that it depends greatly on the time passed in Maltúdu Bay whether our next endeavours be prosecuted at Abai on the western, or Tusan Abai on the eastern coast. The inquiries to be here gone into are similar to those I propose to make at Maltúdu. Much more might be added on this topic, especially of the reported communication by a line of lakes from Maltúdu Bay to Benyar Maseen, which, if true, would, in all probability, place some of these lakes near particular points of the east coast, as the whole line, from the relative position of the two extremes, must be on the eastern side of the island. These reports, and the various surmises which arise from them, are rather matters for verification than discussion; and I will, therefore, only add that, tempted by success, I shall not devote less than a year and a half to this object; but, in case of finding a sickly climate, or meeting with a decidedly hostile population, I shall more easily abandon these fields and turn to others of not less interest, and, perhaps, of less risk. I shall then pursue my researches in the island of Celebes, equal to Borneo in riches, and superior in picturesque beauty to any of the islands of the Archipelago. This will conclude the first stage of the expedition, during which I hope to see Manila, and to acquire a cursory knowledge of the unexplored tract at the southern extremity of Celebes, called in Norie's charts the Tiger Islands.

"The time devoted to the objects above mentioned must be regulated by the degree of fortune which attends them; for, cheered by success, I should not readily abandon the field; yet, if persecuted by climate, or other serious detriments, I shall frequently shift the ground, to remove myself beyond such evil influence. It is scarcely needful to continue a detail of projects so distant, having already carved out for myself a work which I should be proud to perform, and which is already as extended as the chances of human life, and human resolves will warrant."

* She has since sailed from Plymouth, and "prospering gales attend her" is our sincere wish.