

LITERATURE.

Voyage of the Samarang, by Captain Sir EDWARD BELCHER. 1848.

We have heard pretty nearly enough of Rajah Brooke, of Sarawak and Borneo, and even of our new colony Labuan. We shall, therefore, skip over the parts of these volumes, which respect these regions, for what we consider the more interesting portion of them; that which regards the east coast of Borneo, and the Archipelago that stretches between it and the Philippines.

The east coast of Borneo seems quite as favourable for trade as the north-west, having quite as deep indentures of river, with larger towns and sultans to be found within them, almost as accessible to shipping as Brunai, and more ready for commerce, or even for such colonisation as Mr. Brooke has attempted. To two of those cities, Gunung Tabor and Bulungan, Sir Edward Belcher penetrated, and concluded treaties with the chiefs for the prevention of the slave trade, and for commercial relations.

The accounts of these places, given by Sir Edward, are as interesting to the trader as to the naturalist and the geographer. And when we learn that he was able to send a despatch overland from Bulungan to Brunai, the capabilities of an empire in the north-east corner of Borneo will be seen. We deprecate, indeed, any such gigantic colony, having quite enough of vents for emigration expenditure without that; but still we have our misgivings, and have no doubt that Mr. Brooke's example will beget imitators, and that we shall have more English rajahs superseding

Malay chiefs, and ruling over a Dyak population, on the choice spots of this interesting coast.

The author's account of Sooloo, the island centre of empire in these parts, is full and satisfactory. It is evident, from this account, that final repression will not be put to pirates, unless a formidable expedition be directed against the country of Illanona, in the great bay of Mindanso, of which the coral rocks and indented creeks form their stronghold. It was rather a preposterous idea of the French admiral choosing Basilan for the French colony in these parts. It is precisely opposite the mouth of the pirate bay, pirate itself; so that to hold Basilan would have required a fleet and a two years' war, for which the French admiralty not being quite prepared wisely abandoned the island.

Indeed the sole business of the French in those seas seems to be to drop missionaries in the islands. This of course leads to mistrust and hostility, not to conversion, from the fact of the missionaries having been invariably the forerunners of conquest.

A Spanish commander once showed some Japanese a map of the world, and pointed out on it the extent of the King of Spain's dominions. The Japanese asked with surprise—"How is it that the King has managed to possess himself of half the world?" The Spaniard replied—"He commences by sending priests, who win over the people; and when this is done, his troops are despatched to join the native Christians, and the conquest is easy and complete." No wonder the Japanese rulers banished the Spaniards and put to death their priests. A similar story might be told of English merchants.

All the Chinese races repudiate Christianity for political reasons. The Malays repudiate it because they are conquerors and Mahomedans. But perhaps the most promising converts that ever were offered to Christian missionaries are the Dyaks; and, no doubt, the empire that Mr. Brooke is founding at Sarawak must, if it survives, be a Christian empire. The missionaries there have a much more hopeful task than in China, or Loo Choo, or in the islands peopled by Mahomedans and Malays.

No work has appeared as yet which gives so full a knowledge of the archipelago between Borneo and the Manillas, as this present one of Sir Edward Belcher. The volumes are valuable alike to the geographer, the mariner, the merchant, and the man of science: they contain information for all, in addition to a rich fund of entertainment for the general reader.

Not the least interesting portion of them is to be found in the account of the Samarang's visit to Nangasaki, the foreign port of Japan. A change has obviously taken place there, a change favourable to the renewal of trade. The feeling of the authorities of Nangasaki was evidently in favour of relations with the new comers, of whose prowess in China they have received very correct accounts. Their dislike and repudiation of the French were probably owing to their knowledge that the French were in the habit of sending catholic missionaries, that class of whom they are most in dread. And the Dutch would no doubt keep them informed on this point.

The account which the author gives of a French missionary dropped on one of the islands of Loo Choo, shows how little progress these gentlemen are likely to make. Sir Edward's account of the Loo Chooians differs considerably from that of Basil Hall, who, he asserts, was kept prisoner by the good Loo Chooians on several occasions,—a startling addition to the worthy captain's well-known romance.

Sir Edward Belcher fully clears himself, we think, from the charge of having needlessly attacked the Malay prahus without being certain of their piratical character. On the contrary his forbearance seems to have been great on many occasions. And his very difficult dealings with many sultans, as well as lesser Spanish authorities, with never other than a good result, shows him to be possessed of as much prudence and address as spirit.