

RAJAH BROOKE'S JOURNALS.*

The publications which have hitherto appeared on the subject of Mr. Brooke's proceedings in the Indian Archipelago have stimulated, but have by no means satisfied the curiosity naturally excited by the career of the English Rajah. There can be no doubt, indeed, that the condition of Borneo and the neighbouring islands must become from year to year an object of increased speculation and inquiry, not merely from their connection with the development of our commerce in a new and vast field, but from the breadth and grandeur of the prospects which they open of the spread of Christianity and civilization in the southern hemisphere. The volumes before us are an interesting and most valuable addition to our knowledge of the people and the islands in the Indian Seas, and of that romantic series of events by which the courage, enterprize, and enlightened humanity of a private gentleman seem to have placed almost at the disposal of Great Britain the fate of territories scarcely less important or less rich in natural resources than those of our Indian empire. The leading facts in the career of Mr. Brooke are now pretty well known, and the work of Captain Keppel has presented to the public some of the most striking portions of the journals in which Mr. Brooke, with the rapid but faithful pen of a man of action, has recorded his observations and adventures. The volumes before us complete what may be called the autobiography of the Rajah, and give us in addition the journal of Captain Munday, who bore a leading part in the expedition of Sir Thomas Cochrane against the Sultan of Borneo, and who was entrusted with the chief command in the subsequent operations which led to the occupation of the island of Labuan. The history is thus brought down from the earliest period to the present time. The earlier journals of Mr. Brooke, which begin with 1838, contain the account of a visit to the island of Celebes, respecting which our knowledge has hitherto been very limited, but which, both in the social condition of its population and in its natural productions, has much to reward European investigation. The later journals exhibit to us the picture of the English adventurer, in his position of Rajah or Governor of the province of Sarawak in Borneo, gradually, but steadily and surely, diffusing around him the blessings of civilization, raising up a long oppressed race, and acquiring, by his tact, resolution, and beneficent activity, an influence and authority amongst the native tribes that may well be called magical. Mr. Brooke's account terminates in 1846, with the horrid tragedy by which the Sultan of Borneo drew upon himself the avenging notice of the British Government. Captain Munday has added to it his own most interesting journal, in which the punishment inflicted upon the Sultan is given in full detail, and in which we have the liveliest pictures of the suppression of the various pirate communities who formed what may be considered the anti-English influence in Borneo.

The population of Borneo, as of nearly all the neighbouring islands, consists of two distinct races, the Malays and the Dyaks (or oriental negroes); the former being everywhere the ruling class, and the latter suffering from every species of oppression. The improvement of the inferior race, and their protection, both from domestic tyranny and from the incursions of pirates, to which they are perpetually exposed, were the objects of Mr. Brooke from his first interference in the affairs of Borneo. These objects appear, from his journals, to have been steadily pursued, and with so much success as to render his own district of Sarawak a sort of paradise for the oppressed race. Numbers have flocked thither as to a secure asylum, and under the encouragement of regular laws have betaken themselves to steady labour. Nor has the benefit of good government been confined to the wretched Dyaks. In 1844 the Malay population had doubled, and increased numbers of Chinese, the most industrious of the eastern races, had appeared, and for all there was found employment in developing the varied resources of the soil. As a specimen of one of the modes of industry practised at Sarawak, we may quote Mr. Brooke's account of the operations set on foot by himself for the collection of diamonds:—

"The Santah river is famous for its diamonds; and I believe that they abound, as the natives formerly worked largely, making holes of various depths close to the stream; and Patiogi All assured me, that he himself, with four men, once got sixty diamonds, some of three and four carats, in one day. The establishment of Santah consists of Hajji Ibrahim, the Chinese Mohammedan, already mentioned, two Banjar diamond workers, and six labourers, and I have to-day added four Chinese for the diamond trench. The natives, as I before said, work in holes on the water's edge, and then sift the earth in search of the precious stones; but it is a tedious and uncertain process, and by no means likely to develop the real resources of the land, and I have therefore resolved to work after the Chinese fashion, of trenching the grounds with a run of water through the trench. The course of the river is peculiarly favourable for this operation. Three excavations in the trench to receive the deposits of diamonds and gold. The outlay will be about £100 sterling. How the imagination fires at the mention of a diamond mine—diamonds as big as pigeons' eggs are present to the fancy, and each day the dreaming possessor may expect wealth, and each day be disappointed. My expectations are, however, moderate, and I think reasonable, for I propose to work the mine to support the plantation, and if the diamonds only pay for the labour, a few years will produce a revenue in coffee and nutmegs, betel and cocoa-nuts, for the soil is excellent. The diamonds are found mixed in the gravelly substratum, and there is likewise a small quantity of gold to be obtained. The earth is washed at the water's edge in large round wooden pans, shaped like shields; the diamonds are picked out, and there remains a residue of black sand like gunpowder and gold particles; of course a good deal of neatness and attention is requisite, and the workers seem jealous and superstitious, dislike noise, particularly laughter or merriment, as it is highly offensive to the spirit who presides over the diamonds, and what is perhaps more important in their eyes, the diamonds cannot be found if the abode of quiet is disturbed by unholy mirth. It is surprising to see people calling themselves Mohammedans yielding to Pagan rites of presenting offerings to the spirit of the mine—the Gnome King—fowls, rice, eggs, etc., are weekly offered; but I was pleased to hear that they were sensible enough to eat up these good things after the oblations have been made. Hajji Ibrahim, with the most solemn face, requested me to give him an old letter, and he engraved thereon some Chinese characters two inches long, which, being translated, signify, 'Rajah Muda Hassim, James Brooke, and Hajji Ibrahim, present their compliments to the spirit, and request his permission to work at the mine.'"

The most stirring portions of these volumes are those which relate to the expedition against the Sultan, and to the suppression of piracy. The Indian Seas have been, and, to a great extent, still are, infested with pirates, who issue from their strongholds in small vessels called prahus, and attack and plunder the native merchant boats trading between the different islands, or make descents upon the villages lying near the coasts. The northern coast of Borneo contained a number of pirate stations, with which some of the leading chiefs of Borneo were connected; and it was by the advice of these persons that the Sultan, though he had in the first instance given encouragement to the friends of Mr. Brooke and the promoters of legitimate commerce, was induced to enter into the most sanguinary measures for the maintenance of the pirate interest. Upon the approach of Sir Thomas Cochrane's squadron, in the summer of 1846, to Bruné, the capital of Borneo, the Sultan fled into the interior; and Captain Munday, accompanied by Mr. Brooke, was despatched in pursuit of him. They followed the chase through a series of swamps and morasses, but were unable to meet with an enemy, except in two or three places, where they were annoyed by the fire of scattered parties lying in ambush. The Sultan, however, though not captured, was thoroughly frightened, and subsequently showed himself submissive enough. His evil advisers were disclaimed and dismissed, and an undertaking given to show no more favour to the pirates. It was still necessary, however, to visit the pirate settlements in detail, and repeat along the coast, for the benefit of the whole population, the lesson given to the Sultan at Bruné. This service was effectually performed by Captain Munday, Mr. Brooke being still his companion. After duly punishing some of the most notorious of the pirates, Captain Munday returned to Bruné, where he found the Sultan repairing the disasters from which his capital had suffered. An interview took place, and the following is the picture given of the potentate of Borneo:—

"The sultan received me at the entrance of the audience hall, and the marines, who were drawn up in a position directly enfilading the divan, presented arms as I stepped over the threshold, and made their pieces tell well together. I observed the old Monarch tremble in his slippers, and look round with amazement; for the landing of the body was very much against his will, and he evidently entertained a slight suspicion that, as he well merited punishment, I would not as his highness undoubtedly would have done in my place, namely, kidnap him by treachery. He appeared about 60 years of age, his countenance evidencing

* Rajah Brooke's Journals. By Captain Rodney Munday, R.N. In two volumes. [Murray.]