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THE EDINBURGH REVIEW AND THE  
EXAMINER.

We insert a letter from the writer of an article on Malay Piracy, in the July number of the *Edinburgh Review*, in reply to one of ours on the same subject. The writer, it will be seen, is uneasy at being set right, and greatly prefers tossing and struggling within the meshes of his own mistakes. Some of these mistakes are simply glozed over, while others, among the most fatal to his fidelity, are discreetly passed by altogether. Two errors only he admits. He had described the ostrich as a denizen of New Guinea, among the damp forests of which the poor animal could not live; he has discovered that it was only a native of the arid deserts of Africa and Arabia. The second error is of his own adduction. He had called the "East" the "West;" which is pretty much the same thing as naming a man's head for his heels, or not knowing which of the two was uppermost.

Of the glozing process the following are samples. Pepper was called in the *Review* a staple product of Java, and he perseveres in this, simply because the Dutch Government, in the exercise of a monopoly and in its want of wisdom, thinks proper to force the culture of it on a small scale. Tea, cinnamon, the clove, and the cochineal insect, might be stated as staples also, for they are grown in Java in the same manner as pepper,—all being, like it, unsuited to the soil and climate; but, surely, they are no more staples than grapes, pines, and melons are staple products of England, although largely forced.

The volcanoes of Borneo and Celebes, in which no intelligent being is ascertained ever to have seen a volcano, are still adhered to; and on such evidence as this. Mrs Somerville is (Sir Charles Lyell is not) disposed to ascribe the formation of the islands in question to Plutonic and not Neptunian agency, and a certain mountain in the first-named island is said to have been known to the natives for generations under an epithet which implies "fire." Hence this mountain must be an extinct volcano, and hence Borneo and Celebes must be of volcanic formation. A certain islet of the Archipelago of procreant outline is designated by an epithet which signifies "pregnant," yet it has never been known to bring forth anything, unless, maybe—a mouse!

The population of the Archipelago was estimated in the *Review* at 40,000,000; and now this extravagance is still maintained, and an attempt even made to substantiate it. The attempt raises it to half the alleged number, and this with execrable materials. Sumatra, for example, is put down at 7,000,000, although over nine-tenths of that great island, no European foot has ever trod. The western side of New Guinea, inhabited by savages inaccessible from their ferocity, is put down for an item of 2,000,000; and this only because, by the Editor of the *Moniteur Oriental*, such "is said" to be the population. This is predicated, too, of a country respecting which the very writer himself, a little

after, adds, "we know not yet what the island contains." The remaining 20,000,000 is made up by Borneo, Palawan, Magindano, and the eastern side of New Guinea, of all of which the most numerous inhabitants are not men, but monkeys. To eke out the grand total of 40,000,000, small islands, some of them so minute that a microscope is required to identify them on Arrowsmith's sheet map, are super-added! He who is contented with such statistics as these, may be expected, in due time, to believe in the existence of the African nation which had feet of such expansion that they used them as umbrellas during the plumps of the monsoon, or—in any other reported monstrosity whatsoever.

The hyperbolic account of Malayan piracy is persevered in. The broad and important fact that no European or American ship, however small, having a European or American crew, and no regular Chinese junk, had ever been captured by this banditti, formidable on paper, is altogether passed over. The style of argument employed in depreciation, to use the writer's own words, is as follows: "If eleven prahus could maintain a fight for eight hours with the Nemesis, would not the fleet just alluded to (one of ninety-eight prahus, supposed to have 2,450 men on board) have been equal to a Chinese junk?" The answer is easy. We suppose "not equal;" since neither ninety-eight, nor any other number of piratical prahus have ever captured a Chinese junk. The logic of the reviewer is bad, and his narrative unfaithful. The real facts of the action alluded to are these. The piratical boats were anchored in shoal water, with hawsers from their sterns mooring them to the shore, so that the steam-vessel could only fire long shots at them, and these, from the ground swell with which she was struggling, but indifferently directed. This, and not the strength or courage of the pirates, prolonged the action to eight hours. In a word, our charge of monstrous exaggeration on the subject of Malay piracy is without answer or approach to it. Virtually, indeed, the exaggeration is given up as untenable.

The Arcadian picture of Malay banditti in repose is said to be founded on the accounts of Sir James Brooke, but we have seen nothing like such a statement in anything published by or for Sir James Brooke. If we had, knowing it to be repugnant to every known condition of human existence, we should have disbelieved it, and felt ourselves obliged to put Sir James down, not as what he is, an enterprising and veracious traveller, but as a traveller in a very ambiguous sense.

A profound silence is observed respecting some of the most prominent extravagances of the review, which we must consider, therefore, as no longer maintained or maintainable. The figment of the 12,000 islands of the Archipelago, so oft repeated, is no longer insisted on. Mundy is no longer placed over the head of Marsden,—a position which the modesty of the officer, had he been consulted, would unquestionably have declined for himself. About the monstrous scheme of costly aggression on friend and foe, called a project for the suppression of Malayan piracy by the formation of an indefinite number of British settlements throughout the Archipelago (itself well worthy of buccaneers), not a syllable is repeated. This folly, at least, we seem to have succeeded in extinguishing, and so far we have attained our main object in writing on the subject.

The reviewer, thus overwhelmed by error on error, and convicted of insinuating evil counsel through a respectable channel, has the courage, notwithstanding, to think that in thirty-two pages he has committed only two mistakes; but truly we believe the mistakes are as numerous as the pages. We produce one additional example. Certain adventurers from Arabia are described in the *Review* as cutting out kingdoms for themselves with their good swords, or, as Gibbon has it, "with the sword in one hand and the Koran in the other;" a description from which we should expect to find that the natives of the Archipelago were ruled by princes of Arabian descent. The reader, after all we have said, will not be much surprised to find that this cutting out of kingdoms with Arabian scimitars is a thing of the imagination only. The native princes of the Archipelago, from Sumatra to the Philippines inclusive, are genuine natives of their respective islands, and, as far as record and tradition extend, such has been the case for the last five centuries. The missionaries who converted the natives of the Archipelago to Mahomedanism were not genuine Arabs at all, but the half-bred descendants of Arabian merchants; men who, born and bred in the country, had acquired the necessary knowledge of the inhabitants and their languages to make efficient missionaries—a kind of knowledge which a true Arabian is incapable of acquiring. There is one exception, but a seeming one only, to the universal purity of blood of the native princes. One petty prince of Borneo is descended from a half-caste Arab, who, within the memory of persons still living, acquired his little sovereignty; not, however, by aid of his own good sword, but by aid of the unromantic sword of the Dutch East India Company! Such is a sample of the manner in which the history of remote nations is written for British edification.

The reviewer charges us with taking some fifteen weeks to write our exposure. In this he greatly overvalues himself, and overrates our trouble. We wrote as early and published as soon as we found convenient, and the time occupied by the task must be measured not by weeks, nor even by days or by hours. With like fairness we might charge him with having taken two months to pen his extenuation.

He charges us with garbling in order to misrepresent. This is not correct. His own words were cited, and, that there might be no mistake, marked as quotation. Where errors were so flagrant and so palpable, artifice, had it been justifiable, was superfluous. He himself is perhaps the only party that can find advantage in garbling his own language.

He does so, and here is an example. In the *Review* his Arcadian banditti are described as possessing gardens "as trim and well-ordered as any in China." But, in his defence, the epithets and the comparison are dropped, and nothing left but the naked noun; so that the little corsair Edens may be like the Imperial garden of Muk-den, or like the gardens of the Hesperides, or like an English cabbage garden. Yet most probably they are much less like any one of these, than "the garden of the sluggard." The truth is, that they consist of some slattern patches of yams and bananas, with now and then a few straggling sugar-canes, not for manufacture, but for munching, all rudely fenced in with bamboos against the wild beasts of the adjacent forest. Such a picture of a little paradise is certainly not romantic, but then it is not unreal, nor a mockery of the actualities of society. The gardens of Barbary are pleaded in extenuation. There would be something in this if the descendants of the Moorish conquerors of Spain were Malays or stealers of heads, or their gardens as trim and well-ordered as any in China. But as neither is the case, the comparison is worthless. Surely no defence at all would be better than this obtrusion of new errors in vindication of old ones.

The name of the author of the *History of the Indian Archipelago*, we perceive, is introduced by our correspondent, as it seems to us, somewhat abruptly, and somewhat gratuitously. That gentleman, should he see the reviewer's letter, may defend himself, if he think it worth his while, which most probably he will not. We may say, however, that, as far as our memory serves us, we have seen him quoted with commendation by William and Alexander Humboldt, by Ritter, by Balbi, by Marsden, by S. T. Coleridge, and by Francis Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review*. Possibly, therefore, he may rest contented with their approbation, nor feel disposed to attach any great weight to the dissent of those who, without knowledge of people or language, strangers even to the outward forms of nature itself, draw their inspirations and their knowledge of far lands from the gossip of naval officers, and from Purchas his Pilgrimes.

Our correspondent seems to promise us further communication; but, as we cannot lend our columns to mere polemics, we must inform him, at once, of our determination to publish no more at present on the subject. If he be of opinion that he has any valid defence to make, and the editor should happen to agree with him, the proper place for it is, of course, the *Edinburgh Review*; and in the ninety-two volumes of that memorable and admirable journal he will find several precedents for this course. To whatever may appear there, we shall reply, should it be necessary.