

PIRACY IN THE INDIAN ARCHIPELAGO.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE 'EXAMINER.'

Sir,—In the July number of the 'Edinburgh Review' appeared an article of mine, on piracy in the Indian Archipelago, which seems to have occasioned great uneasiness to one of your contributors. During fourteen or fifteen weeks, surrounded by Malay grammars and dictionaries, piles of Dutch folios, and all the other literary artillery within his reach, he laboured at a refutation of the statements contained in my article, and made his formidable appearance about the middle of October. Had he consulted me he might have spared himself a world of trouble, as I would have shown him at once the weak points of the article, and disclosed to him the only two errors it contains; one of which, with all his industry, he has failed to discover. What he mistakes for errors are really facts. Like most other persons who write in a passion, he assails everything right and left, tilts at volcanoes and ostrich feathers, at pepper, prahus, piracy and population;—nothing comes amiss to him. Had he not been very angry, he might have remembered that a man may sometimes prove too much as well as too little. He is kind enough to name certain books which he, probably, thinks may be useful to me on some future occasion. As I have not, by any means, done with the Archipelago, I am obliged to him for his intention, though "it turns out," to borrow a phrase of his own, that I am a little more familiar with these books than he is, as will presently be made evident. With respect to the 'Journal of the Indian Archipelago,' one of the works of which he supposes me ignorant, it happens curiously enough, that I was one of the first subscribers to it in this country, and that, by one of its most influential supporters, I have long been engaged to contribute to it.

But I must respect your space—and at once to the main objections of my angry critic. My first great offence is volcanic. Relying on the studies and investigations of those who have paid most attention to the subject, I attribute the formation of the Archipelago to Phitonic agency—and instance thereof Borneo and Celebes. Here the critic immediately takes me up and affirms, upon his own authority, that "there is no evidence of a volcano, active or extinct, in either of these islands." It is clear that fifteen weeks will not suffice to render one a thorough master of this subject. Johnson once said, "It is easier to praise certain books than to read them;" which my critic exemplifies in his own person: for, notwithstanding the high terms in which he speaks of the 'Journal of the Indian Archipelago,' it is clear that he did not read its very opening paper, since there my statement is fully borne out, and the volcanic soil of Celebes is particularly dwelt upon (page 14). This Mrs Somerville also adopts in her 'Physical Geography.' With respect to Borneo, Mr Williams, the geologist, observes that "Gunoneg Api, near Buso, has been known to the natives for generations past as the Fire Mountains; and it is supposed, as its name would indicate, to have been an active volcano. The sconeolaceous matter found throughout the district would warrant this conclusion—and accounts for the appearance of iron and other ore on the exterior." ('Brooke's Journal,' II, p. 384.)

Your critic unluckily stands in the category of those who have bad memories. He says I enumerate "veined ebony" among the staples of New Guinea. I do no such thing. I say that "veined ebony" is brought from the Phillipines, and "ebony" from New Guinea. For this I have the authority—not very valuable certainly—of Mr Crawford ('Hist. Archipelago,' I, 454), corroborated by the unimpeachable testimony of Captain Stanley ('Stoke's Discov. in Australia,' II, 336). It is unlucky for my critic that he is also a wit, because, in order to make a point, he will at any time hazard an inaccuracy. I speak in my article of "the rice and pepper of Java and Sumatra;" whereupon he jocosely observes, that "black pepper" is "not now produced in Java at all, although it probably may have been in the days of Adams of Gillingham." Crawford, however (vol. III, p. 358), says, it is produced, though not in considerable quantities. And Temminck, who wrote last year, speaks of the pepper plantations of Java; and enumerates it among the exports ('Tem,' I, 320) of the island, as does also Reynolds, the American voyager—('Voyage round the world,' 289, 315, 321.) After all, my words meant the rice of Java, and the pepper of Sumatra; but, interpret them how you please, it appears they are correct. The critic next displays his learning on the subject of population; and here he certainly makes use of the 'Journal of the Indian Archipelago' without misunderstanding it. Mr Bleakes says that the population of Java exceeds 10,000,000, which the critic repeats correctly. But there his sound information ends; for, flying away to the island of Suéva, in the Phillipines, he estimates the population as next to that of Java. But this, if Dutch authority be worth anything, is a great mistake. For what is the number of inhabitants in Sueva? Two millions and a-half he says,—very good. Turn to Temminck, and you will find that the estimated population of Sumatra is seven millions; though, for his part, he only allows it four millions and a-half. Even so, however, the amount is something in excess of that of Suéva. Again, in the 'Moniteur Orientale,' the western extremity of New Guinea, under the dominion of the Netherlands, is said to contain two millions of people; while eight hundred thousand souls are attributed to Bali. Thus it "turns out" that the critic is wrong when he says that no reasonable inquirer ever attributed to the Archi-

pelago "a population of more than fifteen millions." For myself, I only observed that it contained forty millions, "according to some calculations." And we are able, we see, to account for upwards of twenty millions without referring to Borneo or Celebes, or Hindanas, or Palawan, or the Moluccas, or the eastern frontiers of New Guinea, or any of the smaller islands except Bali.

Of the Papuans the critic's estimate is very strange. He says they "are far below any African nation in the scale of civilisation." There are tribes in Africa, whose ingenuity scarcely enables them to build themselves a hut, while the Papuans not only possess comfortable dwellings, but are able to build themselves large and strong prahus, in which they sweep the seas as far as Java.

This brings me to the question of piracy itself, on which your contributor's ideas seem to be all at sea. I could make the reader merry with his mistakes; but you would scarcely, I fear, afford me space for comedy, so I confine myself to facts. In describing the extent of piracy, I say there is scarcely a single island within the limits of the Archipelago which does not send forth pirates. And this assertion of mine is sufficiently borne out by the Historie de la Piraterie in the 'Moniteur Orientale,' and by Tennurida's shorter sketch. The writer says that Java is an exception. But any language would allow of this, as my meaning clearly was that there are very few islands which at some time or other do not swell the ranks of piracy. With respect, however, to Java, if the larger island be free, the smaller groups lying along its coast are pronounced by the Dutch themselves to be haunts of freebooters. It would require a very long article to go into all the proofs of what I now state, opposing assertion to assertion, but referring to the proofs, which is more than your contributor does. To obtain a correct idea of the formidable system of piracy described in the 'Edinburgh Review,' let the reader consult Keppel's narrative, the narratives of Mundy and Belde, and the memoir of Dalton and that of Sir James Brooke on piracy, in which he observes that he had once an opportunity of counting ninety-eight prahus starting on an expedition with an estimated crew of 2,450 men. Now, if eleven prahus could maintain a fight for eight hours with the Nemesis, would not the fleet just alluded to have been equal to a Chinese junk? But if these buccannereers, "thriving to a nuisance," are not formidable, wherefore the sanguinary attacks made upon their haunts by Keppel, Cochrane, and Talbot? Wherefore the expedition of the Spanish war-steamers against the Balamin, and the unsuccessful attack of the Dutch upon Sulu? My description of a romantic piratical village is based on the accounts of Sir James Brooke and Captain Mundy. But the critic thinks the existence of gardens inconsistent with piratical habits. Has he never read any account of the coast of Barbary? Did the Algerines possess no gardens, pretty towns and villages, and even cities, while addicted to piracy? But that the pirates of the Archipelago are something more than a nuisance, may be inferred from the following passage, taken out of the 'Journal of the Indian Archipelago,' which my antagonist admits to be good authority

"Other islands have become the seats of great piratical communities, which periodically send forth large fleets to cross the seas and lurk along the shores of the Archipelago, despoiling the seafaring trader of the fruits of his industry and his personal liberty, and carrying off from their very houses the wives and children of the villagers. From the creeks and rivers of Borneo and Lahore, from the numerous islands between Singapore and Barolu, and from other parts of the Archipelago, piratical expeditions less formidable than those of the Lannus of Sulu are year after year fitted out. No coast is so thickly peopled, and no harbour so well protected, as to be secure from a thunderstorm, for where open force would be useless, recourse is had to stealth and stratagem. Men have been kidnapped in broad day in the harbours of Pinang and Singapore. Several inhabitants of Province Wellesley who had been carried away from their houses through the harbour of Pinang and down the straits of Malacca to the southward, were recently discovered by the Dutch authorities living in a state of slavery, and restored to their homes. But the ordinary abodes of the pirates themselves are not always at a distance from the European settlement. As the King of Bengal is only known in his own village as a peaceful peasant, so the pirate, when not absent on an expedition, appears in the river and along the shore in the islands of Singapore, as an honest boatman or fisherman."

But I have not yet done. The critic alters my language throughout to suit his own purpose, that is, creates the error which he afterwards refutes; one mistake it is surprising he should not have discovered. It is the employment of *eastern* for *western* in speaking of the coast of Celebes, which may have been an error of the pen or of the press. Of one mistake, however, he has convicted me. I accidentally enumerated ostrich feathers among the exports of New Guinea. This is erroneous, or may be, for we know not yet what the island contains. However, I make him a present of the feathers, especially if they be white, that he may stick them in his cap by way of triumph. Should there be any rejoinder to this reply, I trust I shall be allowed to proceed with my refutation, because, so far from having exhausted my proofs or arguments, I have scarcely yet treated upon the principle, and stop short here only because I am apprehensive of the pressing too much upon your good nature.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
THE WRITER OF THE ARTICLE "ON PIRACY,"
IN THE 'EDINBURGH REVIEW.'