

LABUAN.

[FROM THE SINGAPORE FREE PRESS OF NOV. 2.]

Her Majesty's ship *Mæander*, Capt. the Hon. H. Keppel, arrived here on the 1st inst., having left Labuan on the 15th ult. The *Mæander*, which it will be recollected left this on the 29th of August, having on board his Excellency Sir James Brooke, arrived at the Moratabas River and anchored at seven p.m., on Saturday, the 2d of September. Sir James Brooke left the ship and proceeded to Sarawak at one p.m. on the 4th, the frigate manning yards and saluting him with 21 guns. On the 21st his Excellency's flag was hoisted at Sarawak, and as it rose above the neighbouring trees, it was saluted from the fort and the houses of the principal Datus. The business of the day commenced by the presentation to Sir James of a splendid sword, by the European inhabitants of Sarawak; Mr. Hentig, as their spokesman, addressing him nearly as follows:— "Sir, in presenting to your Excellency this sword, a testimony of the high esteem which we the European inhabitants of Sarawak entertain for your public and private virtues, permit me, in the name of those around, to congratulate you on your triumphant return to your own people, whom you, and you alone, have raised from the miseries of anarchy and civil war to their present happy position—a return rendered doubly brilliant by the honours it has pleased our gracious Sovereign Queen Victoria to bestow upon you for your distinguished services, which have also been acknowledged by the whole nation. These evidences of your countrymen's approbation cannot but be highly grateful to your Excellency, but rest assured, however warm your reception may have been in England, it cannot exceed that which we feel in Sarawak, and which we desire to commemorate by the presentation of this sword as a mark of our high esteem and heartfelt admiration."

Sir James replied in a neat speech, assuring the European inhabitants of Sarawak that his feelings towards Sarawak were the same as they always had been, and that when he should cease to be amongst them the sword then presented to him should be handed down to his successor. The scene in the audience chamber was most picturesque. At the head of the room was seated Sir James Brooke, on his left hand the Hon. H. Keppel, on his right Captain Brooke and the European inhabitants, and immediately behind him Dr. Treacher and Lieut. Allen, Mr. Baker and other officers of the *Mæander*, whilst on the floor, in front, sat the principal native chiefs, Datus and Pangerons. The

three principal Datus were each presented with a valuable sword by Sir James, who addressed them in Malay, assuring them that every assistance would be given by him, and their old friend the Hon. Captain Keppel, for their safety, whilst the most active measures would be taken for the punishment of the pirates, and those found in any way, either directly or indirectly, assisting. It may be here stated, in explanation, that the Sakarran pirates are again becoming troublesome, and will soon require active measures to be taken for their suppression. After the presentation to the Datus the crowd of natives dispersed, and Pangeran Mahmud was gratified with a trip in the "steam gun-boat," in which he was accompanied by most of the native chiefs. The next day at noon, at the request of the inhabitants, Captain Keppel embarked his splendid brass band on board the *Ranee*, and the inhabitants were entertained, as this graceful little steamer glided along the bright waters of the Sarawak, with some of the most popular airs, amongst which was the "Sarawak Polka" lately introduced from England, which, however, failed to produce amongst the swarthy assembly that devotion to the shrine of Terpsichore, which it did on its first introduction in the ball rooms of Old England.

On the Sunday following his Excellency embarked at Sarawak for Labuan, arriving at the *Mæander* at six, when the noble frigate was in a few seconds got under weigh, and after a succession of light winds arrived at Labuan on Friday, the 29th of September. His Excellency landed on the 2d of October, under a salute of seventeen guns from the *Mæander* and *Royalist*, and was received by the lieutenant-governor, Captain Hoskins, Mr. Lowe, and Mr. Scott, and having gone through the requisite formalities at once proceeded to business. We do not doubt but that, under the skilful management of Sir James Brooke and his talented staff of officers, Labuan will ere many years attain that importance as a British possession which its situation, combined with its valuable coal mines, is fitted to give, and we doubt not that ere many months it will be made a station for the steamers to coal at; indeed, it is already reported that the Spanish steamers intend to call there monthly for the purpose of coaling on their way to Singapore, and those of the Peninsular and Oriental Company will, probably, eventually adopt the same plan. Although there have been a few deaths, Labuan cannot be considered as unhealthy, and the climate is described as being pleasant, the nearly constant rains at night cooling the atmosphere. The town from the sea presents a regular appearance, the better class of houses having jetties running out into the bay, at the ends of which, overhanging the sea, are neat and well-arranged bathing-houses. The coal seams are situated about seven miles from Victoria Bay; the methods used for working the mines are of the most primitive order, and it is to be hoped will soon be superseded by some plan which will facilitate the operation of coaling, and materially diminish the cost for labour. This, we learn from one well capable of judging, would be easy of accomplishment, and Sir James Brooke will no doubt soon direct his attention to the subject.

The weather on the coast of Borneo, as usual at the change of the monsoons, has been very unsettled. Amongst the casualties has to be included her Majesty's ship *Royalist*, as we briefly noticed in our paper of last week. The *Royalist* sailed from Labuan for Singapore on the 4th of October. On the next day she experienced very heavy squalls, and on the second night was totally dismasted off Tanjong Baram, the hull being left uninjured. She proceeded under jury masts back to Labuan, and in the evening of Friday sighted her Majesty's ship *Mæander* off the entrance of the river Bruni. The escape of the whole of the officers and men of the *Royalist* seems most miraculous, for although mast after mast fell successively across the deck, only one seaman was injured, and he is progressing favourably. Lieutenant Gordon, her able commander, had a very narrow escape, having been knocked down by the rigging and falling masts, under which he was buried for some minutes. The *Royalist* lost all her boats. She will be towed to this by the Honourable Company's steamer *Auckland*, which left for Labuan this morning. The *Mæander* also experienced heavy squalls. The launch and steam-tender, which accompanied her, had a very narrow escape,—the launch, having filled, went under and was saved eventually with loss of guns, &c.,—the men fortunately were also saved by the frigate's boats. The steam-tender anchored, but the weather moderating, got under weigh, and was overtaken by a heavy squall and dismasted, and although great fears were entertained for her safety, she arrived safe at Labuan, a few hours after the *Mæander* anchored there. She will remain there, in company with the *Jolly Bachelor*, in attendance on Sir J. Brooke.