

BORNEO, AND ITS RESOURCES.

Sir,—I am glad to find you again taking up the question of Borneo, and substituting fact for flummery. Some tropical insects are still working hard in the opposite direction, as busy as pismires, but not so honestly employed. I have now before me three periodicals, two of them new ones, and one old enough to have known better, each with a puff on Borneo. As a sample of such productions, which are evidently written in the belief that all their readers are of the capacity of nursery children, I shall offer a few remarks on the article in the old journal.

The writer is severe, throughout, on the "gross ignorance" of all who happen to differ from him. Let me show, then, the state of his own knowledge. "The unknown interior of Borneo and the other islands" is asserted by him as possessing "incalculable stores of wealth," and then we have a specification of some of the incalculables. The difficulty, however, is to understand how the writer came to be inspired to tell so very exactly what is contained in the "unknown!" Among the valuables of the "unknown interior" is a certain commodity called "Tripang." Now this article, a great slug, called by the learned *holothurion*, is the produce of the sea, and not of the land, as its popular name "sea-slug" shows, and its being caught in the interior can only be accounted for by the interior being an "unknown interior." Tortoise-shell is another inland production of the same writer. His next communication will perhaps inform us that pearls are the production of the unknown interiors of Ceylon, Persia, and South America.

Shortly after this display of tropical statistics he has the following:—"What British heart would not feel a thrill of pleasure at hearing in a temple among mangrove woods, from the lips of once-untutored savages, the voice of thanksgiving and praise swelling up to the true God, instead of wild chants and superstitious invocations addressed to unknown deities?" The mangrove, as every one knows who ever saw a tropical coast, or carefully read about one, grows, and grows only, in two or three feet depth of salt ooze, and the grove of mangroves is, moreover, invariably the favourite haunt of the mosquito. Fancy, then, a Christian temple built in the salt mud, the sea ebbing and flowing around it, crowds of mosquitos within it, and the thermometer at ninety degrees, and you have this writer's prospects for the pious!

The writer next informs us, that "Borneo is so lovely an island that some have conjectured it to be the scene of the "One Thousand and One Nights' Entertainments." The conjecture is his own, and no one else's. His own description would be an Arabian tale, only there is no "entertainment" in it.

According to the magazine writer, the Malay pirates are not mere handfuls of men, as some persons "in their intense ignorance" have asserted, but a "vast organised body, whose numbers have not yet been correctly ascertained." The organised body, whose numbers "are not ascertained," is then described as being like a "vast web," and the vast web, "with cruel determination," is described as "spreading through the intricate channels of the Eastern seas," and plundering every vessel that comes within its reach. What a desperate web! All that can be safely predicated of this miraculous web is that it is made of fustian!

At one time, says the admirer of the Arabian Nights, in Borneo, "it was well known that a pirate fleet of 1,200 strong was cruising about the Indian seas." According to the calculations of the Bornean writers, the crew of each would be fifty men, so that this fleet must have carried 60,000 mariners! I wonder how they were fed, for "the lovely island of Borneo," in ten years' time, would not yield a surplus produce sufficient to provision them for a six months' cruise. Sir James Brooke must pray, I should think, to be saved from such friends. The spider expelled from the parlour by the besom must weave its web in the garret.

I am, &c. A COLONIST.