

#### BORNEAN PIRATES.

On Wednesday night a public meeting was held at the London Tavern, convened by the Aborigines' Protection and Peace Societies, "to consider the fearful sacrifice of human life on the coast of Borneo, in July last, and to petition Parliament for the total and immediate abolition of the practice of awarding head-money for the destruction of pirates."

Mr. JOSEPH STURGES, having been called to the chair, proceeded to explain the object for which the meeting had been called; and read a letter, apologising for non-attendance, from Mr. Colyden, M.P.

The Rev. HENRY RICHARDS then proceeded to address the meeting, and entered into a lengthened detail of the expedition in July last against the Bornean Dyaks of the Saribas river, in order to prove that the massacre that followed was deserving of public investigation. He maintained that there ought to have been evidence to justify such a fearful act of wholesale destruction. Well, all the evidence that these Dyaks had engaged or contemplated engaging in a piratical expedition, was a report brought to Sir James Brooke while at Sarawak, that the Sarebun and Sakarran tribes designed to make a piratical attack on certain villages in the Rejang. That report, which was brought by their known and hereditary enemies, the Malays, he found was never substantiated. There was also another report that they threatened to massacre the inhabitants of a small town called Palo, unless they supplied them with arms. There was, however, one more fact against them which he ought to state. They also sent a message to Rajah Brooke, telling him he was an old woman. (Laughter.) This was literally the whole of the evidence given by the perpetrators themselves of the grounds on which this tremendous massacre was committed. To show that it was a cold-blooded massacre, and not a struggle with combatants in any degree equally matched, he read a variety of extracts from the accounts of the officers engaged. He contended that the law of piracy gave the criminal the right to a trial before he was condemned; but in this instance the men, without offering any resistance, was butchered in cold blood, and never had the form of a trial. The reading of the extracts, and the comments of the speaker, were received with loud cries of "shame, shame," and frequent other marks of indignation.

The Rev. C. B. GRIBBLE, a clergyman of the Church of England, moved the first resolution, viz.:—"That, in the opinion of this meeting, the recent slaughter of 1,500 or 2,000 Dyaks off the coast of Borneo, by English seamen acting under the direction of Sir James Brooke, on the vague and general imputation of piracy, is a gross outrage of all the rights of justice and humanity, and calculated to cast a deep dishonour on our national character, as a civilised and christian people, and that a thorough and searching inquiry should be immediately instituted by parliament into all the circumstances of this transaction, as well as into the general line of policy pursued by Sir James Brooke, in his treatment of the aboriginal tribes of Borneo."

Mr. AARON SMITH said, he had been attacked by Malay pirates in those seas. If the natives caught an Englishman they would kill him at once, and boil him next day. (Laughter.) As regarded head money, he considered it objectionable, because an English officer was paid for his services without it. (Cheers.) He apologised for intruding, but he felt called upon to rise to vindicate the British naval officers, than whom a more gallant and virtuous race of men did not exist.

Mr. GEO. THOMPSON, M.P., next addressed the meeting, and in order to disprove the dangers of landing among the natives of Borneo, referred to the accounts given by Sir James Brooke himself, of his own expedition up the river Sarawak without convoy, in his little yacht the Royalist. He hoped the meeting would commission him in his place in Parliament to demand a committee of inquiry. (Loud cheers.) Then they could have the last speaker before it to give evidence, and if he (Mr. Thompson) were on the inquiry, he should not be satisfied until he had turned him inside out. (Laughter and cheers.)

The first resolution was then put and carried *nem. con.*

Mr. J. H. PARRY moved the next resolution, which was to the effect, "That the judgment of this meeting, the system of awarding head-money for the destruction of pirates as at present sanctioned by the law of this country, ought to be immediately and utterly abolished, as a practice barbarous and unjust in principle, which presents a direct temptation to the shedding of innocent blood, and which cannot fail to produce a pernicious and demoralising effect on the character of all persons engaged in the naval service of the country and brought under its influence."

The resolution having been seconded by Mr. S. F. WOOLMER, was also carried *nem. con.*

A petition to Parliament, founded on the foregoing resolutions, and to be presented by Mr Cobden, having been adopted, thanks were voted to the chairman, and the meeting separated.