

THE *TIMES* AND RAJAH BROOKE'S
SPECIAL PLEADERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE DAILY NEWS.

SIR,—The *Times* is silent itself on Borneo, but on Monday it had a letter from a correspondent signing himself "Verax." The writer, after stating that he is going to comprise what he has to say "within a narrow compass," inflicts on the luckless *Times* some 220 lines, but not one line to the purpose. The question is, indeed, correctly enough put. Was the Sarebas and Sakarran fleet of prahus, destroyed on the 31st of July, a piratical fleet going on a piratical expedition? Having put the question rightly, however, he never answers it, but much after the manner of Aaron Smith, dodges and wanders all over the Archipelago without ever approaching it.

In support of the opinion that the Sakarran and Sarebas Dyaks are pirates, and were rightly and justly served out, he has quoted a round dozen of witnesses. A few of these, if they had ever said a word on the subject, might be entitled to credit, as Raffles, Forrest, Crawford, Siebold, and Melville de Carnbee. Now, there are three quarto volumes under the name of Raffles, and in these there is no mention whatever of the Sakarran or Sarebas Dyaks, nor is there an allegation made in them of piracy against any Dyak whatsoever. In the discourses delivered by Sir Stamford before the Batavian Society he described the manners of the Dyaks of Borneo, but never once hints at their being pirates. He delivered to the same society in 1812 a paper on Borneo, by Mr. Hunt, derived from personal observation. Mr. Hunt's description embraces the whole circumference of Borneo. He expressly names Sarawak—he describes Malay piracy—enumerates the piratical stations—suggests remedies—protests against wholesale extermination—and never once hints at the Dyaks, whose manners he describes, being pirates. That paper of 50 pages will be found as an appendix in Capt. Keppel's narrative.

Forrest wrote a quarto, in which there is no allusion to Dyak piracy. This adventurous person navigated in safety for whole months the most infested parts of the waters of the Archipelago, in a native boat, with a Malay crew, rigged after an European fashion, which he called "The Tartar Galley." Crawford has written three octavos on the Archipelago, and from first to last there is not in them a hint of piracy on the part of any Dyak tribe whatsoever. The other credible witnesses are equally silent about Dyak piracy. Mr. Dalton (who had lived among the most powerful tribe of the Dyaks at Borneo) never hints at Dyak piracy. He could not, indeed, have thought it possible that they could be pirates, since he expressly says that a Bugis prahu, with fifty men, a few muskets, and a couple of swivel-guns, defied and routed a whole army of them.

Five out of the twelve witnesses are naval officers, who had been engaged in the persecution of the Dyaks of Borneo, and who had shared head money. But, besides this taint on their evidence, every man of them was ignorant of the language, manners, customs, and history of the people, and may truly be said, independent of professional blindness, not to have seen much beyond the length of their own noses. Sir James Brooke is on his trial, and his assertion must be taken, in that position, for no more than it is worth. If he has said at one time that the Sakarrans and Sarebas were pirates, he has said at another what was tantamount to the impossibility of their being so—that they had no firearms, and in terror took to their heels at the first report of a musket. Sir James Brooke it was that discovered that gunless Dyaks might be formidable pirates, and even he did not make the invention until they began to be troublesome to him with their blow pipes!

Next we have an appeal to what the *Times* calls "the community of Singapore," and the opinion in question is that of some 30 individuals out of a population of 60,000; that opinion, too, having been clandestinely trumped up, and, for fear of local criticism, smuggled out of the settlement without publication. Then follows the opinion of the Admiralty Judge, at Singapore, who neither examines nor cross-examines witnesses, but takes what is laid before him by the claimants for prize money, such evidence being by the forms of the court sufficient (let us charitably suppose) to enable him to grant a certificate; meanwhile special care was taken that, among the few prisoners taken, not a man should be brought before his tribunal for trial; a test which would inevitably have blown the whole fabrication to atoms. The writer of the letter takes infinite pains to prove what no one denies, what every writer has been insisting on for the last 335 years. This is only silly and impertinent supererogation. Piracy was far more rampant in the Archipelago

when its waters were first navigated by the Portuguese and Spaniards than it is at this day. As indeed nature has adapted the Archipelago for piracy, and its people are rude and lawless, there is little doubt but that piracy must have existed within it two thousand years ago just as it does now, and that it will continue to exist as long as the people are uncivilized. There is not a nation of the Archipelago that had the power that has not, at one time or other, committed acts of piracy—even the now peaceable and agricultural Javanese. Among the few who never did commit piracy, or were charged with committing it until the days of Sir James Brooke, were the Dyaks of Borneo; not from want, probably, of mischievous intention, but from sheer want of all power for the implied evil. At the close of the 17th century buccaneering was rife in the seas of tropical America, but the buccaneers were white scoundrels, who had the daring and capacity for plunder and devastation; and we do not include in the category the red men of America, although on the spot, for we know that, however mischievously inclined, they had neither the courage nor capacity to make pirates. Civilizing, and not slaughtering, is the way to put down piracy.

Can the writer of the letter be the same man who lately, according to one of your correspondents, proposed to build a church in the salt mud on the shore of Borneo, in which his neophytes should sing hymns to the buzz of mosquitoes? or is he a lawyer preparing a case, as if he were going to defend some desperate felon at the Old Bailey? Whatever he may be, the *Times*, according to its wont in similar cases, ought to have put "advertisement" at the head of his letter, and then the journal and the state would have got by it the only advantage which it can confer on any living creature.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,
AN EAST INDIA MERCHANT.

London, Feb. 14.

