

ON the 9th of November last Lord EDDISBURY wrote to the Secretary of the Admiralty, acknowledging the receipt of Admiral Sir F. COLLIER's "report" of the Sarebas doings, and adding that "her Majesty's government entirely approve of this gallant and successful operation." On the 14th of the same month Mr. MERIVALE wrote to the Secretary of the Admiralty, "Lord GREY has received with much satisfaction Commander FARQUHAR's report of his successful proceedings against these pirates."

The genial current of Foreign-office and Colonial-office "approbation" and "satisfaction" was, however, destined to experience a sudden check. Before the end of the year a despatch was received from Sir JAMES BROOKE, containing the rather startling information that he was in the habit of giving his native subjects and allies "rewards for the capture of Dyak women and children," trusting that this practice would "lead to a more humane system of warfare." This intimation, which is thrown in parenthetically, and without any further explanation, in the Rajah's despatch, was suited to excite uneasy misgivings in the minds of government. In the inflated accounts of the Sarebas affair published by Mr. URBAN VIGORS and others, mention is made of the mutilated bodies of females having been found on the shore, and it is assumed that the fugitives from the destroyed flotilla were the perpetrators of these atrocities. The admission of Rajah BROOKE that his native followers can only be restrained from the murder of women and children by paying them for such as they preserve alive, shifts suspicion to a very different quarter. Accordingly, we find Lord PALMERSTON on the 1st of January last writing laconically to the Rajah: "With reference to your despatch No. 10, alluding to rewards given for the capture of Dyak women and children, I have to request that you will explain the circumstances which led to the offer of these rewards." Since Lord PALMERSTON has at last discovered the necessity of inquiring more minutely into the proceedings of the Rajah, there are one or two other points on which he might catechise him with advantage.

From Commander FARQUHAR's report we learn that the expedition started from Sarawak on the 24th of July, and took up its position at the mouth of the Kaluka on the 27th. It was only on the morning of the 28th that Sir JAMES BROOKE and Commander FARQUHAR learned that a flotilla from the Sarebas River was at sea. Of the destination and operations of that flotilla they even then remained in perfect ignorance. Yet on the 31st, when it made its appearance, they surrounded it with an overwhelming force; and without so much as summoning the boats and crews to surrender, they poured in rockets and grape upon them, and drove the war-steamer over them, till they had destroyed upwards of 60 prahus (Sir CHRISTOPHER RAWLINSON says 80) out of 88, and killed about 500 men. It was not till the 8th of August that the Rajah and Commander FARQUHAR were told the flotilla had attacked two towns on the coast. It is obvious from the statement of Commander FARQUHAR that at the time the Sarebas were attacked neither he nor Sir JAMES BROOKE had any definite charge to make against them. And Sir JAMES has taken good care not to inquire too narrowly into the truth or falsehood of the charge, which information received eight days after the attack has enabled him to advance in extenuation of it, for he writes to Lord PALMERSTON, on the 1st of October, "The male prisoners I have released without punishment." After the slaughter he had perpetrated it is not easy to imagine what further punishment he could have ventured to inflict; but his own reputation required that he should at least have brought his prisoners to a judicial trial, in order that the world might learn what they had been punished for. He has shrunk from that test of the propriety of his actions. Of this Lord PALMERSTON should insist upon having an explanation.

There is another point which Lord PALMERSTON ought to ask the Rajah to explain—the erection of a fort on the Batang Lupar River. By our latest advices from Singapore, we learn that this fort has actually been erected opposite the point where the Sakarran branch joins the main stream of the Batang Lupar. That locality is within the territory of Bruné, 60 miles and more to the east of the frontier of Sarawak. Under what pretext has Sir JAMES taken upon himself to construct a fort, and to place artillery and a garrison in it, on the territory of an independent government, with which we have a treaty of alliance, without consulting it? This is not the

only anomalous feature of this measure. Throughout the Rajah's journals, published by Captains KEPPEL and MUNDY, we are told over and over again that it is the Malay chiefs resident among the Dyaks who are the promoters and practisers of piracy. The Lacksimana of Samarahan is mentioned as one who has a strong hankering after piratical exploits, and SHERRIFF MULLEE as one of the most irreclaimable of the piratically disposed. Yet we learn that the Lacksimana is one of the two leaders employed to erect the fort, and that SHERRIFF MULLEE is one of the parties who is to live under its shadow. Sir JAMES is now taking part against the Dyaks with those whom he formerly led us to believe were the piratical oppressors of the Dyaks.

Sir JAMES may be able to explain this seeming inconsistency, but assuredly an explanation is called for. This erection of a fort within the frontier of an independent state is corroborative of the view we have taken of these proceedings from the beginning; that they are not instituted with a view to repress piracy, but to extend the territorial acquisitions of the Rajah of SARAWAK. In a letter from a respectable merchant at Singapore, which we publish in another column, we are assured that acts of piracy by the Dyaks of Borneo were unheard of until Sir JAMES BROOKE became Rajah of SARAWAK. The whole tenour of our private correspondence from the Archipelago, and of all that has been published respecting it, is to the same effect. The Malays, the Illancons, are pirates, but not the Dyaks. The story told in MUNDY about putting an inland Dyak chief to death, who had evinced reluctance to submit to Rajah BROOKE, by the Rajah's orders, because if he had been allowed to live he might have proved dangerous to the Rajah and the Rajah's friends, shows what "strong measures" Sir JAMES adopted to establish his authority in Sarawak. He has never concealed his intention to add the neighbouring rivers to his rajahship. In MUNDY (Vol. I., p. 75) we find him saying: "They [the Sarebas] nibble and nibble at the bait of better government, and perhaps I shall catch them at the last." He has caught them now that he has erected a fort to overawe and control them. The destruction of the Sarebas flotilla, like the execution of the Hill-Dyak chief, had in view, not the repression of piracy, but the extension and consolidation of the political power of the Rajah of SARAWAK.

To this moment no evidence has been produced that the Sarebas flotilla was engaged in a piratical expedition. Commander FARQUHAR "learnt," he does not say from whom, that it had attacked two towns on the coast and been beaten off from one of them; but not till after had destroyed it. The prisoners were dismissed without trial. The depositions taken at Sarawak are not produced, and from the garbled extracts published in a Singapore paper they do not appear to have contained anything that could bring home a charge of piracy to the flotilla. These depositions, too, be it remembered, were taken by Rajah BROOKE himself, who had good reason to desire to make out a strong case against the crews of the flotilla, and by the Rev. Mr. M'DOUGALL whom the Rajah allows to reside at Sarawak on sufferance.

Altogether these Borneo proceedings look blacker and blacker the more that information respecting them is grudgingly allowed to ooze out. Contributions have been exacted from the Kenowit tribe who are admitted not to be pirates; first and last, some thousands of Sakarranā and Sarebas have been slaughtered; not one specific act of piracy has yet been laid to their charge or supported by evidence; and it is confidently affirmed that not one European or square-rigged vessel has ever been attacked upon their coast. Yet British men of war have been made accomplices in these mysterious and unexplained proceedings. Of the 98,000*l.* for head-money, which the first lord of

the Admiralty is this year to ask the House of Commons to vote, by far the greater part is for operations on the coast of Borneo. The affair of August last will alone cost us 20,700*l.*, for head-money.

Nor is it only the expense and the loss of character already incurred that has to be considered. In a letter which we have received from Singapore by the last mail we find this passage:—"I have reason to believe that BROOKE has written to the naval commander-in-chief for another force to go against Malindu. In fact, his existence depends upon keeping the Borneans in terror."