

SIR FRANCIS BARING took upon him on Thursday to read a lecture to the members for Manchester and the West Riding, on account of what they said about the operations in the Chinese and Bornean seas against pirates and alleged pirates. Yet Sir FRANCIS has, by his own act, more unequivocally reprobated these operations than any words used by Messrs. BRIGHT and COBDEN possibly could. He has introduced a bill to repeal the act of parliament which authorised and rewarded them. By seeking to repeal the Head-Money Act Sir FRANCIS BARING and his colleagues proclaimed that it had led to abuses. After doing this it must really have required considerable command of countenance to lecture gentlemen for calling these abuses by their right names.

It is not only from the repeal of the Head-money Act that we are warranted in inferring that ministers—whatever official relations may prompt them to say—are ashamed of the proceedings to which it has given occasion. The recent change of policy in the Chinese waters can only be accounted for on the assumption that instructions have been sent out to discontinue the wholesale, indiscriminate slaughters to which the Head-money Act had given occasion. In our paper of Tuesday last we published an account of the capture of two piratical junks by the Reynard, Commander CRACROFT, on the 21st of March, near Nine Islands. In this affair the firing was discontinued as soon as it was apparent the pirates were attempting to fly; every effort was made to take alive—not to kill. The only casualties were owing to the accidental drowning of some of the pirates who threw themselves overboard with a view to escape. Commander CRACROFT, by pursuing this course, was enabled to save the lives of all the innocent captives, and to secure the pirates for trial. Such conduct may be less melodramatic than the slaughters we have been accustomed of late to read about, but it is obviously more conducive to the ends of justice. And it is the most emphatic confession that could be made of the remorse felt by men in authority, for the very different conduct they have hitherto sanctioned.

It seems to have been assumed throughout the discussion of Thursday, on the head-money ingredient of the 107,330*l.* voted for miscellaneous naval services, that the terms of the Act of Parliament rendered it imperative to pay the head-money. We are not disposed to acquiesce in this view. The act declares that the bounty for killing must be paid, if the judge of a Vice-Admiralty Court certify. But the act does not authorise the judge to certify, without taking proper precautions to ascertain the real facts of the case. Now, in the Vice-Admiralty Courts both of Hong Kong and Singapore, it is customary to certify upon a purely *ex parte* claim and depositions. As the money is paid by government out of the proceeds of the taxes, certainly government ought to have a lawyer present to watch and check these proceedings. In the affair of the *Medea* the Vice-Admiralty Court of Singapore has certified for the full amount claimed by the captors, although there was no appearance made "for her Majesty's interest," solely on the affidavits of the parties pecuniarily interested. The impression of the villagers on the coast, and of disinterested Europeans, is, that the official estimate of the number of junks and guns captured and destroyed, and of persons killed and escaped, would admit of a discount of at least 40 or 50 per cent.

It appears to us most unjust and unreasonable that the country should be called upon to pay the full amount of a claim so liable to suspicion of being exaggerated, no care having been taken to ascertain its correctness. And the proceedings in the Vice-Admiralty Court of Singapore have been still more culpably irregular. Sir CHRISTOPHER RAWLINSON did not examine the witnesses, or take the depositions himself. He delegated that duty to another, and that other, of all men in the world, Sir JAMES BROOKE, the instigator of the operations, who on account of the grave charges made against him in connexion with them, had a deep interest in making out a fair case for himself. The depositions were taken at Sarawak, where Sir JAMES is absolute and uncontrolled master. Some of the deposing parties were his prisoners at the time, and have since been liberated, and he even went so far as to volunteer an additional deposition himself.

Though the House of Commons has seen fit to vote away the people's money upon such unsatisfactory grounds, the national honour and character for humanity is too deeply implicated to allow the question to rest in this unsatisfactory position. Another attempt must be made to extort an explanation of the dark and mysterious proceedings in Borneo. And an opportunity for doing this will be afforded, when the vote for Labuan, in the Miscellaneous Estimates, is moved.

All the circumstances connected with that establishment ought to be sifted and scrutinised. The nominal governor of Labuan has been in receipt of 2,000*l.* a year as its governor, and of 500*l.* a year as resident in Bruné, two quite incompatible appointments. Since he obtained these offices we do not understand that he has visited Bruné at all, and in the course of the twelve months previous to his last brief visit to Labuan, he was only thirty-nine days in all on the island. He was at Pinang when the last Singapore mail was despatched, and from that place he was to proceed as envoy to Siam, an office incompatible with the discharge of the duties of the other two he holds. This is not all: he has a lieutenant-governor, with a salary of 1,500*l.* a year; but that gentleman is at present suspended, under charges exhibited against him by Sir JAMES BROOKE, and the colony is, in fact, administered by a subordinate officer. We cannot imagine that even the present House of Commons will vote the Labuan estimate without a full and satisfactory explanation of circumstances so utterly unprecedented even in our precious system of colonial administration.

Mr. HENRY DRUMMOND attempted on Thursday to represent the charges which have been advanced against Sir JAMES BROOKE as originating with some person or persons who have a private quarrel with him. There is no doubt a private as well as a public controversy waging about the affairs of Sarawak. Sir JAMES BROOKE, at the commencement of his operations there, entered into arrangements with one mercantile concern which he has since transferred or endeavoured to transfer to other parties. A very pretty quarrel has arisen out of these transactions, with which however the English public and government have nothing to do, except in so far as they may throw light on the character of Sir JAMES BROOKE's enterprise. It is with his public, his political proceedings only, that the public are concerned, and these alone have hitherto been brought under discussion. It was quite free to Sir JAMES BROOKE to make himself a feudatory of Bruné, or even an independent sovereign, so long as he did so by his private means and solely at his own private risk. It was equally free to any private merchant to advance money to the new prince, or to buy his antimony as other merchants purchased MEHEMET ALI'S cotton. But when Sir JAMES BROOKE obtained the assistance of British men-of-war to fight his battles in Borneo, and still more when he, after being made an English consul and colonial governor, and in these capacities, implicated this country in his miserable Malay *tracasseries*, his proceedings not only admitted but demanded public animadversion and inquiry. The members of the House of Commons, the gentlemen of the Peace and Aborigines' Protection Societies, the individuals connected with the press who have exposed the Borneo proceedings, have been urged to do so exclusively by public considerations. They have as little connexion with or interest in the pecuniary and mercantile squabbles of the Rajah as Mr. DRUMMOND himself. To say that Sir JAMES BROOKE ought to escape public censure for public misconduct, because he has quarrels about his private pecuniary affairs, is about as untenable a position as it would be to say, were Mr. HUDSON accused of any public delinquency, that he has made private enemies by his railway speculations.

It is curious how the friends and patrons of Sir JAMES BROOKE contradict each other. Mr. DRUMMOND attributes the charges brought against Sir JAMES to "a certain person who had sought to obtain a share in his undertaking, and had been disappointed." Mr. HAWES asserts that "his recollection and belief is that Sir JAMES BROOKE has not any mercantile undertaking." We cannot advise Mr. SIDNEY HERBERT, whose question elicited this declaration to pin his faith to Mr. HAWES'S "recollection and belief." The one is as imperfect as the other is unfounded. If Mr. HERBERT will consult the volumes of Captain MUNDY, he will find journals of Sir JAMES BROOKE which contain an account of his first trading venture to Sarawak, and a letter from that gentleman to the captain, in which he states his intention and hope to make his monopoly of the antimony a profitable concern. And if Mr. HERBERT will inquire in the City, we have good reason to believe that he will find that there are at this moment several hundred tons of antimony in London warehouses for sale on account of Sir JAMES BROOKE and a partner.