

The house went into committee of supply on the naval estimates, and much discussion arose on several of the items. Mr. Cobden objected to the £120,000 for steamer basins and docks; he objected also to the system of having government factories for making boilers. Mr. Bright, too, took objections, and in answer to Sir F. Baring and Admiral Bowles, Mr. Bright replied to the argument that it was necessary to have those establishments, in order to meet concurrent steps on the part of France, by showing that France had not, but that we had, extensive resources in our numerous private establishments on the Clyde, the Mersey, and the Thames, capable of meeting any emergency that was likely to arise.

The next item was £167,330 for miscellaneous services.

Mr. COBDEN said in this sum £100,000 was included for the capture of pirates, and the destruction of enemies' ships. He asked for an explanation of that.

Lord D. STUART would like to know how many enemies' ships had been captured, and how many piratical vessels had been taken? He had not heard that we had been at war lately.

Sir F. BARING said they had had several discussions relating to head-money for pirates. £20,000 of this was for the capture of the Borneo pirates.

Mr. COBDEN should like to know something more about this. He doubted whether these so-called pirates were pirates. Sir James Brooke had become possessed of a tract of land, had quarrelled with his next neighbours, and now stigmatised them as pirates. But had these barbarous tribes attacked any of our vessels? There was not a single instance of this. The rate of insurance at Lloyd's on vessels going to Borneo showed that there was no danger from these so-called pirates. Half the tribes of Africa might be called pirates on as good ground. They were engaged in predatory warfare with each other, but would never think of attacking an English vessel: it was therefore monstrous to make a charge of £20,000 for services against these pirates. Sir James Brooke had laid in wait for them, on their return from a marauding excursion; he poured his broadsides into them without any summons to surrender, or any inquiry being made. They made no resistance; and after this butchery, in which about 500 suffered, which was more like a battue of sheep than anything else, the parliament was asked to grant £20 a head for the destruction of these poor creatures. The way in which Sir J. Brooke treated those taken alive, showed that he did not consider they had been guilty of piracy. They had been murdered, on evidence which would not justify a conviction for petty larceny. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. H. DRUMMOND said there was abundant proof these tribes were pirates. The reason of these attacks against Sir J. Brooke was, that a certain person had sought to obtain a share in his undertaking, and had been disappointed; and hence the envenomed attacks on Sir J. Brooke.

Mr. COBDEN replied that Sir James Brooke was living on his own property in the equivocal character of a rajah, and receiving £2,000 a year from the government as governor of Labuan, and £500 as consul to his own court. They had besides appointed a deputy-governor at £1,200 a year, and the whole island was in confusion because the lieutenant-governor had misconducted himself in the absence of the governor. (Hear, hear.) The hon. gentleman would not tolerate jobs in England, and he hoped he was not going to tolerate them in Borneo. He had no personal hostility to Sir James Brooke; he never saw him in his life; he had never come into contact with him; but he had a right to speak of him on public grounds when he was called on to vote away the money of his constituents. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. PLOWDEN, having been in China, testified to the atrocities of the Malay pirates in those seas, at least so it was in 1816, the time when he went, "as an amateur," to destroy them.

Mr. BRIGHT thought the house ought to look into it; this vote of £100,000 represented 5,000 persons slain at £20 a head. What information had the government got about it? Was this £100,000 decided upon in the courts of Singapore, Hong Kong, or elsewhere? If a trial had taken place in distant parts was the evidence of such a nature as would satisfy the courts in this country? (Hear, hear.) Had any evidence been laid before the government here? If so, why did not the right honourable gentleman lay that evidence before parliament, when he came to ask them for so large a sum for so grave a matter as the slaughter of 5,000 assumed pirates. (Hear, hear.) The public were horrified at the atrocities that had been committed; and when he recollected that that house had prayers read every day at that table—when he recollected that they were a Christian parliament, and that they professed day after day, as he heard hon. gentlemen opposite profess, great respect for religion in connection with the state—and when, notwithstanding this, he found them voting rewards for the slaughter of 5,000 human beings, without one particle of evidence that the men they slaughtered were guilty of any crime—he declared that he could not conceive how any parliament, much less a Christian parliament, could do this without—he would not use the words that suggested themselves to him—but without bringing everlasting disgrace upon them. (Cheers.)

Sir F. BARING referred to the address of the merchants and traders of Singapore, thanking Sir James Brooke; he also quoted the confession of a Bornean pirate, and the decision of Sir C. Rawlinson, judge of a local court in which the question had been tried.

Some further discussion took place. Colonel Sibthorp, the Attorney General, Lord J. Manners, and The O'Gorman Mahon supported the vote, the last stigmatising the opposition as "absurd twaddle."

Mr. COBDEN explained that he did not mean to say that the men destroyed were all innocent; he admitted, on the contrary, that they were barbarians, savages, engaged in inter-tribal warfare; and if such were the case, he did not think they were bound to pay for the destruction of such savages, unless it could be shown that they had attacked English vessels. (Hear, hear.)

Colonel THOMPSON said he thought government were in a most awkward position. The captain of a British man-of-war had ordered these men as captives, to be run up to the yard-arm, and to such of them as were wounded be ordered shot to be tied, and ordered them to be thrown overboard. He (Col. Thompson) knew who the parties were, and it was a shame to this country that in this house such transactions should be named, and not be met with universal reprobation. He should detest himself if he ever kept company with men who were guilty of such transactions.

Mr. Sidney Herbert, Mr. Hawes, and the Attorney-General having followed with some explanations regarding Sir J. Brooke,

The committee divided on an amendment for postponing the vote:—For the amendment, 20; against it, 145; majority against, 125.

The vote was then passed, and the house resumed.

The Stamp Duties Bill was read a second time.

The house adjourned at twenty minutes after two o'clock.