

Parliamentary Proceedings.

HOUSE OF LORDS.—FRIDAY, July 12.

Mr. HUME then moved an address to the crown for a royal commission to inquire into the causes which led to the employment of the Queen's forces and those of the East-India Company on the north-western coast of Borneo, which had resulted in a heavy loss of life amongst the Sarebas and Sakarran tribes, reputed to be pirates. He complained of the absence of information for which he had asked, but gave some particulars of this transaction, in which he considered that 1500 men had been massacred in almost cold blood, and by which the arms of England had been disgraced. He was no apologist for real pirates; but inquiry was necessary to remove the impression of those who believed that murder had been committed, as no justifiable grounds had been shown for the destruction of those timid and unresisting men, who, as he endeavoured to prove, were not engaged in piracy and were not professional pirates.

Mr. PLOWDEN defended that "distinguished and much injured and calumniated man," Sir J. Brooke, and described, from personal observation, the merciless character of the pirates infesting the straits and islands of the Eastern Archipelago, the putting down of whom by the strong arm was essential to commerce and civilization.

Mr. HENRY DRUMMOND, with the same view, quoted the opinions of the Manchester and Glasgow Chambers of Commerce, which had teased the government to suppress piracy in those seas, where Mr. Hume asserted there were no pirates at all. In justifying Sir J. Brooke, Mr. Drummond read extracts from a voluminous correspondence to indicate the source to which he attributed the persevering attacks upon Sir James, who had resisted attempts to draw him into commercial speculations, and was therefore maligned and blackened. He pursued this subject into a variety of details, which were highly relished by the house.

Mr. COCHRANE bore testimony to the high qualities and the humanity of Sir J. Brooke.

Colonel THOMPSON said the one thing before the house was, whether these men were pirates or not; if they were, the fact was easy of proof, but not a shadow of evidence had been offered that they had committed any act which could be justly characterised as piracy.

Sir H. VERNEY answered the call for evidence by reading the depositions of witnesses examined in the Court of Judicature at Singapore. He justified the proceedings of Sir J. Brooke, and the policy of dealing summarily with the pirates in the Malay seas.

Colonel RAWDON thought the vindication of Rajah Brooke was complete; and

Sir R. INGLIS believed there had never appeared in the dependencies of England a man who had done more honour to the name of England.

Mr. COBDEN observed that the character of Sir J. Brooke was not at issue; it was not certain that he had ordered the massacre. What Mr. Hume wanted was information as to who was responsible. He denied that there was yet one tittle of proof that these Dyaks were pirates, though they warred with their next neighbours, or that they had ever molested any vessel under the English flag.

Sir F. BARING stated the reasons why the information asked for by Mr. Hume could not be furnished, and, with reference to the motion, he asked what better inquiry could be had than a judicial investigation before an English judge on the spot. Sir C. Rawlinson, in the first instance, had been dissatisfied with the proof that the parties were pirates, and called for further evidence, which was furnished and deemed conclusive; yet the house was told, in the coolest manner, that there was not a tittle of evidence upon the subject.

Sir T. E. COLEBROOKE briefly supported the motion. If they were justified in exterminating the savages in the present case they would be equally justified in exterminating the whole inhabitants of the islands without exception, and if the British force was to be employed for that purpose the house should at least do it with their eyes open and with a full knowledge of the results. With respect to Labuan, he thought the best course the government could pursue was to abandon it, as, in his opinion, it was a mere encumbrance to this country.

The house then divided, when the numbers were—For Mr. Hume's amendment, 29; against it, 169; majority, 140.

The house went into a committee of supply on the civil service estimates, when certain votes were agreed to, and the Chairman reported progress.

Several bills were advanced a stage, and a new writ was ordered for Chester in the room of Sir John Jervis, who had accepted the Chiltern Hundreds.—Adjourned.