

SIR J. BROOKE'S ACCOUNT OF THE BORNEO MISSION, AND HIS GOVERNMENT AT SARAWAK.

A meeting of the Lambeth Association of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, took place last evening, at the boys' school-room, Lambeth-green. It being announced that Sir James Brooke, the Rajah of Sarawak, would be present, there was a crowded attendance. In the absence of the Rev. C. B. Dalton, the rector, the chair was taken by Mr. Rosseter, the rector's churchwarden.

The Rev. T. F. STOOKS, honorary secretary of the Borneo mission, gave a lecture on that mission. He commenced by a description of the island, the interior of which, he observed, was still almost unknown. It had been long noted for its tribes of ferocious pirates; but of those many were now earnestly seeking at our hands the word of God and the knowledge of Christianity—a transformation almost entirely due to the efforts of Sir James Brooke [cheers]. After narrating the circumstances under which Sir James's connection with the island commenced in 1838, and his election to the sovereignty as Rajah of Sarawak in 1839, the rev. gentleman described the position of the three races—Malays, Dyaks, and Chinese—by whom the island was inhabited, and the steps which had been taken by the Rajah to make law respected among the natives. An effect of his wise measures had been to increase the population of Sarawak from 1,200 to 10,000, while the entire population of the colony had increased from 10,000 to 40,000 [hear, hear]. His influence was felt, not only in Sarawak, but all over that side of the island. The religion of the Malays was Mohammedan; the Dyaks had very dim and shadowy notions of religion; they had no temple or priests, and no definite system of worship beyond occasional sacrifices. They were a fine and highly moral people. Their word was their law. The Chinese inhabitants were followers of Confucius—idolators. At the instance of Sir James Brooke the Borneo Church Mission had been formed, and they had been very happy in their selection of Mr. M'Douall as a missionary, who, having received a medical education, was able to attend to both the bodily and spiritual wants of the natives. His conduct had been such as to excite the least possible prejudice, and he was regarded with the strongest affection by the people. Schools had been established; in the Home School there were twenty-five children; in the day schools, where the education was chiefly secular, the number was much greater; and recently a day school had been opened expressly for the Chinese, at their earnest solicitation. A Church, called St. Thomas's, had been erected at Sarawak, Mr. M'Douall having acted as architect, which accommodated about 250 persons. Though the mission had only existed four years, several converts had been made; and there was no doubt that, ere long, whole tribes would embrace the Christian faith. Two missionaries, in addition to Mr. M'Douall, were now labouring there, and a third would shortly be added. The venerable Bishop of Calcutta had made a voyage from Singapore to Sarawak to consecrate the new church and burial-ground; but it was felt desirable to have a Bishop of Sarawak, as the place was at present subject to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London.

Thanks having been voted to the reverend gentleman for his lecture, the chairman introduced

Sir JAMES BROOKE, who was loudly cheered on rising. He spoke as follows: That my heart is in the cause, I am sure everybody knows; for I should not otherwise have been so long in Borneo. If I can give you any information more than the reverend gentleman has afforded—which I really doubt—I shall be most happy to do so. Allow me to say that I am here to-night because your worthy rector asked me to come. I dislike public meetings. I am not accustomed to them, and am always afraid of saying more than I ought to do; for I always feel that I am led on, like very many others on these occasions, to say more than modesty would warrant. But what I can do on this occasion I will do. Let us turn our attention, in the first place, to the object of the mission. If Christianity is to be introduced at all, it must be introduced in a Christian spirit [hear, hear], or we want it not at all. If any particular church is introduced into Sarawak—and the Church of England is the Church in which I have been bred—we claim nothing for it. If we claim toleration, that is as much as we have a right to expect amongst a heathen people. We ask only that toleration which we give to others; we only hope to teach them by persuasion and by kind means. If we fail we cannot help it. If we ask a bishop—surely, in the Church of England, that is the very simplest matter of discipline. You might as well talk of a regiment without a colonel as clergy without a bishop [applause]. These are but the very simplest views of the question. These are the views which I have always held; they are the views which I will always recommend and act upon. And if to-day, in Sarawak, the Christian religion becomes a religion of division and uncharitableness, I hope it may leave the country. It is a subject always deeply to be considered, very deeply to be borne in mind by all Christian people, how they approach a Mahomedan or a Hindoo population. It is not zeal for our own religion that will convince, for an undue zeal may beget an undue zeal in opposition to it [hear, hear]. There is but one way, and that way is the Christian way; it is only mild persuasion, and mild persuasion alone, that will convince this people [hear, hear]. It is in the hands of God whether it shall be to-morrow or a thousand years hence—that is not the business either of this assembly or of a Christian people [hear, hear]. I will say, too—for I am deeply and personally interested in this question—that we must watch the Christian community; for the lessons of history teach us that Christians in a distant land do not always preserve that unity and that Christian spirit which they ought to do. And should these things raise difficulties in our path, remember that I have mentioned them, and remember that we need support from home to help us through them. I will not dwell longer on this subject, for it is a very serious one; but I will turn to the lecture which the rev. gentleman has so admirably delivered, and shall be happy if I can give any

further information. In the first place, you must bear in mind those distinctions of race in Borneo. They have had government; the very bonds of society are loosened; crime is walking abroad; rapine, piracy, oppression—everything that you happily do not know in England is there. You must always bear this in mind when speaking of the operations of this society. When I went there I had no fixed plan—no deep design. I did not go and say, "I will do this or that." I had no design at all; it was thrown in my way, and I followed the path before me. I struggled with difficulty after difficulty; I did not know what to-morrow might bring forth; but gradually light came out of darkness [hear, hear]. That is all I can say, and that is not saying much for myself. We found certain laws and customs existing, and, above all, a generous, high-minded population, willing to be improved. How could we improve them? They had many difficulties to contend with, and they were constantly coming to me as their protector, though, in fact, they were my protectors. They had arms, and if I told them that certain things were their rights, they would take arms to defend those rights. That was the system by which we attained to the very rudiments of justice. Then we instituted a court—a simple court—the simplest in the world. The arrangement is this:—We all meet. There is a round table. Every person of respectability, whether Englishman or native, sits down at that table. The prisoner sits on a mat. The whole trial goes on; every person is at liberty to speak, and the decision is given and recorded at the time. All the proceedings are in the Malay language, every native knows what is going forward, and they often take the deepest interest in the cases. You must never imagine that those natives are at all inferior to us in mental capacity, though they lack European culture. In fact, their mind is equal to the European mind as far as we can judge. If I wish them to do a thing, they will oppose me and say, "It is not proper to do so according to our laws or customs," and then we debate the question. If I alter a law, or say that a law is inapplicable, or cruel, or too lenient, I call the people together in open court and explain to them why these laws appear unsuitable to the state of society that has arisen. I then tell the chiefs to call the people together in their own towns and consult as to what are the best laws for the country, and I will receive their determination. I say in effect, "Is it your wish that that shall be the law by which you yourselves are to be governed?" It is, as far as possible, a self-government of the people [hear, hear, hear]. In my transactions with them I have always found that they are a noble and a highly independent people, and the most generous people in the world. As the rev. gentleman has told you, they are highly truthful. With the exception of the class attached to the court, which is a vicious class, both the Malays and Dyaks, taking the better class—what you would call in this country the respectable class—are most truthful and most generous. They will bear no oppression; they always wear a dagger by their side, and are as ready to use it as an Englishman to use his fist; and if they use it it is just in the same manner as we use our fists, or the same manner in which a gentleman, a hundred years ago, would draw his sword, call on six seconds, and they would turn to in the street—it might be in Lambeth—and fight six to six. Such was the state of English society a hundred years ago, and of French society still more recently. These people will bear no insult. I saw how easily their native rajahs ruled them by acting on this principle, without even possessing their confidence; and that was a lesson to me which I have followed ever since. Whenever a man is accused of any crime, though he may not be of good character, whether he be high or low, and even if he be accused of murder, he is neither confined nor seized, nor is an insult put upon his feelings in any way. I will narrate to you a circumstance which occurred within the last two years. A man of 27 or 28 years of age, a man of respectability, who was constantly about my house and at my table, and was well known to all our party, was suddenly accused of murder. I sent for him in the evening, and took him into my own room. He had his weapon on; he was one of the chiefs. I said to him, "Rajah Lee, you are accused of murder. You know the custom of the country; you know I have a friendly feeling towards you; I am very sorry, but you must be tried, and if found guilty you will be put to death." He said, "Certainly, if I am found guilty I will suffer death. I will do you no harm. Do you think I would do you any harm, or the native chief (referring to one present) any harm?" I said, "No, I don't suppose you would, for you are friendly to me; but I know that at this moment you would if you felt inclined." He said "Why?" I said, "You have got your dagger on, and I am sitting close to you at the table." He instantly pulled it out, passed it across the table to me, in the sheath, and said—"You take that" [cheers]. I refused to take it, saying he was a man of such respectability that I was sure he would submit to the laws. I said, "Go away to-night, but come to the court at twelve o'clock the day after to-morrow; you must be tried for your life; and remember, you will be put to death if you are found guilty." He said—"Give me a fair trial; I will be there." He came; he was in the court unarmed; I am happy to add he was acquitted [cheers]. The judges and the jury immediately got up, and all shook hands with the prisoner, for we were all very glad of it; he was a very good man, and I believe he was perfectly innocent. This will give you some idea of the state of the country, and of our simple mode of administering justice. So it is throughout; there is a degree of simplicity in all the machinery of government, which would be very difficult to imagine in this country. All the proceedings are conducted in the most simple form. Everything is done in the Malay language; there is very little writing; but I hope that good, substantial justice is administered. The courts are composed of a certain number of English gentlemen, mingled with a certain number of natives, who form a judge and jury amongst them, or rather the functions of the two are combined. The consequence is, that our institutions have gradually spread, though, as you must be all aware, beyond the province of Sarawak I have no power or jurisdiction; I am limited merely to offering advice to the different parties who may come to ask it. There is always the element of piracy to guard against, though that I hope is at an end; but still there are a number of Governments that would demoralise Sarawak if they had power to do so. But they have no such power; and the only question is, whether we may not in future apply the same development that has been applied to Sarawak to the other rivers along the coast [hear, hear].

Some other addresses followed. It was announced that the Lambeth Association had collected nearly £100 for the purposes of the society; and at the close the thanks of the meeting were voted to the Chairman, and to Sir James Brooke for his highly interesting communication.