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A Visit to the Indian Archipelago in H.M.S. Mæander, with Portions of the Private Journal of Sir James Brooke, K.C.B. By Captain the Hon. Henry Keppel, R.N. Two vols. Bentley.

This is more a book of polemics than a book of travels, for out of its twenty-four chapters, eighteen are occupied with the threadbare tale of the Rajah of Sarawak, while of these, four consist of vindication and eulogy of the said Rajah, and of open abuse of Mr Hume, his public accuser. The work professes to be a Visit to the Indian Archipelago, but in truth it relates, with slender exceptions, to only one hundred miles of the coast of one island, out of the seven thousand which the Arabian merchants of the fifteenth century alleged that it contained. Captain Henry Keppel is well known to be one of the best officers in the British navy—brave, skilful, enterprising, and humane; but it does not necessarily follow that he should write with the observation and impartiality of a Dampier or a Cook. And on the present occasion he seems to have lent his speaking trumpet to a party who has blown some harsh and incongruous sounds from it. In truth, Captain Keppel never speaks in his own natural voice until he has got rid of the malaria of Borneo. As a contrast to the angry and vituperative Bornean portion of his book, we would strongly recommend to the perusal of our readers his account of the native tribes of the neighbourhood of Port Essington in Australia, which is the best we have ever seen. On comparing the two, they will see the wide difference which exists between statements derived in the one case through the familiar accents of one's native tongue, and in the other through oblique interpretation. As to the abounding vituperation of the hon. member for Montrose, although no doubt intended to be quite crushing, the great probability is, judging by the forty years of his honoured and useful public life, that it will be passed by unheeded, and that he will pursue the even and inflexible tenor of his own way as if not a word of it had ever been written.

We shall confine our examination of the work before us to the principal portion of it, and that to which its author himself seems to attach most importance,—such of it as relates to Borneo. In four principal and fourteen supplementary chapters, great exertions are made to prove that the two tribes of Bornean savages called Sarebas and Sakarran—two out of at least one hundred of the same class of men—were "pirates," and hence well deserved the bloody chastisements which, under the auspices and direction of Sir James Brooke, they received in the years 1844 and 1849. What, then, let us first decide, does piracy consist in, according to the law of nations? Blackstone defines it to be "robbery and depredation on the high seas." We prefer to go to a great lawyer for our definition, instead of going, with Capt. Keppel, to Johnson's dictionary, where "a pirate" has three different meanings,—"a sea-robber," "any robber," and "a larcenous bookseller." This would seem to be a little too vague for law. If the two savage tribes in question committed the offence described by Blackstone, they were justly and properly punished; but if they did not, it necessarily follows that those who assailed them were themselves acting piratically, however unaware of the fact. That the assailed savages, when under excitement, are truculent head-hunters there can be no question, but head-hunting, although it be murder, is not piracy, any more than it is "poisoning."

The more advanced nations of the Archipelago have committed acts of piracy from the first appearance of Europeans in its waters, near three centuries and a half ago. There is even evidence sufficient to show that piracy was rife, long before the advent of Europeans. Yet down to the days of Sir James Brooke, the Dyaks, or savage inhabitants of Borneo, had never been published and denounced as pirates. In 1851, a Dutch official paper was laid before Parliament, in which the Dyaks are once, and once only, called pirates, with about the same amount of evidence as that adduced by Sir James Brooke. This, however, was seven years after Sir James's denunciation, as will be presently shown.

The first question we have to determine is, whether the denounced savages had the capacity to commit "robbery "and depredation on the high seas." In 1840, four years before they were attacked, this is Sir James Brooke's own account of the two supposed peccant tribes, the Saribas and Sakarang. The first of these he describes as the more savage of the two, and this is his account of them:

> The Saribas are by no means so warlike as the others, and from their great dread of fire-arms may be kept in subjection by a comparatively small body of Malays. The sound of musketry or cannon was enough to put the whole body to flight; and when they did run, fully the half disappeared, returning to their own homes.

This has proved a most inconvenient passage, and the advocates of the Rajah of Sarawak have attempted to set it aside, by attributing an error in copying to the last editor of his journal, and making it appear that it related to another tribe of Dyaks than the Saribas. But the terror of all the tribes of Dyaks for fire-arms by no means rests on this passage. Mr Dalton, a traveller, who between twenty and thirty years ago lived for several months among the most numerous, warlike, and powerful tribes of the Dyaks of Borneo, the Kayan, near neighbours of Sarawak, for their dominion extends from the sea of Java to the sea of China, has the following account of their apprehension of fire-arms:

> What these people most dread is the musket. It is inconceivable what a sensation of fear comes over the breast of the Dyaks when they have an idea that a few muskets may possibly be brought against them. No inducement will prevail on them, however numerous, to go forward. Hence the Bugis (colonists from Celibes on the southern coast) with a handful of men, act towards them as they think proper, making them deliver over, not only the produce of their country for a trifling exchange, but a certain number of their children yearly, whom they sell as slaves. Selgie (the Kayan chief) can bring into the field, at least, 12,000 fighting men, and the Bugis, with fifty muskets and a few boat-swivels, will not hesitate to meet them. The fact is, they no sooner hear the report of a gun than they run deep into the jungles. If they are in boats, they leap into the water, and after gaining the shore, never stop until they are out of hearing of the report. The most sensible of the Dyaks have a superstitious idea of fire-arms; each man, on hearing the report, fancies the ball is making directly towards himself. He therefore runs, never thinking himself safe as long as he hears the explosion of gunpowder.

The Dutch account, to which we have already referred, equally attests the Dyak ignorance of fire-arms.

> The schooner Haai (shark) stationed at Sambas Borneo, it says, succeeded in inflicting severe loss upon a flotilla of thirty Dyak prahus which had dared to lay in wait for her. In the same way the coasts of Pontianak were disturbed by Dyak pirates. At Mumpawa they came to blows with them. Sherif Mohamat, the Commandant of the district, having learnt that nine of their prahus were at the mouth of the river, each manned by from thirty to forty bandits, resolved to attack them with only three prahus. They fought so closely that scarcely any other weapon than the klewang (cutlass) was used. The Commandant had thirty-seven men killed; the loss of the enemy amounted to eighty. It appeared that these Dyaks came from Saribas, a locality situated in the interior of the countries to the north of Sambas, which is only accessible to the small light vessels of the Dyaks, of slender form, and of which all the parts are united by means of canes. In their voyages they burn and massacre along the shores all that is within their reach. As trophies, they carry off the skulls of the victims of their ferocity. They have no fire-arms, but generally use the cutlass and javelins, or spears of wood hardened by fire.

Here we have thirty canoes without fire-arms "daring to lie in wait" for a Dutch cruizer, and a native officer of the Dutch Government, on his own judgment, attacking nine boats with one-third of their number, and apparently for no other reason than that they were "at the mouth of the river," the nature of the combat proclaiming the absence of fire-arms.

To crown this irrefragable evidence, we have the testimony of the naval commander of the expedition of July 1849, who in his public despatch has the following words:

> But the Dyaks, being almost devoid of fire-arms, cannot stand against a well-armed force, their weapons being the sumpitan, with poisoned arrows (Sir James says they do not use the sumpitan) spears, &c. &c., and a short sword, having a shield for protection.

Yet our author fancies that the Dyaks, like the Caffres, may, from the example of Europeans, have learnt the use of fire-arms of late years, although in dread of them before. This is, in fact, to imagine that in the four years between 1840 and 1844, when they were first attacked as pirates, they had learnt the use of fire-arms, although they had not done so in 400 years from the Malays, who for that length of time had possessed a knowledge of them, and been living among them. This hypothesis requires no answer. Captain Keppel even goes the length of estimating how many muskets the Dyak fleet, attacked on the 31st of July 1849, might have had; and giving eight to each boat, he makes the total for the fleet of 150 prahus, no fewer than 1,200; and this, too, after the Commander of the expedition had publicly stated that "the Dyaks were almost devoid of fire-arms." It looks very like manufacturing muskets "to order," as the phrase is in Birmingham. The number of guns captured by the victors amounted to nine small swivels, all taken in the interior,—none in the boats, and no muskets were at all "returned!"

But then it is said there were Malays among the Dyaks, and Captain Keppel, in another place, gives us the means of estimating the number,—not that were there, but that might have been there,—and that is, from one to ten or one to twelve for the Dyaks. But it is not sufficient to show that Malays were present. It should be shown that there were Malay prahus capable of committing an act of piracy. Of this there is not a tittle of evidence. Yet a Malay pirate prahu is as readily known from her equipment as an African slaver by her shackles and slave deck. Mr Newbold, who wrote an elaborate account of the British settlements in the Straits of Malacca in 1839, the very year of the first advent of Sir James Brooke in Borneo, describes a Malay war prahu. He says that these prahus are of the burthen of from eight to ten tons, with a strong bulwark of beams of wood, and each carrying four brass swivels of small calibre but long range,—one at the bows, one at the stern, and one at each side. No such vessel was found in the Dyak fleet of 150 sail. From all this, we come to the conclusion that the Dyaks, from the frailty of their vessels, their want of fire-arms, and their terror for them in the hands of others, are no more capable of committing piracy, that is, "robbery and depredation on the high seas," than a flight of mosquitos would be able to rob a bee-hive. That they are amenable to punishment as murderers for head-stealing, by States whose territories they invade for this purpose, is equally certain. But they invaded no British territory, and attacked no British ship.

It will naturally be asked what evidence existed of piracy on the part of the Dyaks, to warrant the different expeditions against them. There is none at all previous to the expeditions, and very little after. With respect to the expeditions of 1844, there is an invitation from Sir James Brooke and an acceptance of it by the Naval Commander. "Come "then, my dear ——, for there is plenty to do for all hands. "I have ordered a gun-boat to make our force stronger." With respect to the expedition of 1849, it is stated that the two denounced hordes had "run riot during his absence at "Labuan," and that "they had lately, with impunity, captured

" several trading boats, devastated two rivers, burned three villages, and slaughtered at least 400 persons, men, women, and children." These are mere allegations without proof, and indeed most of the details are such as were incapable of being proved. But even if proved to the letter, the alleged atrocities amounted, from their very terms, to no more than intertribal warfare, with which the British Government had no more to do than with the quarrels of the independent savages of Paraguay or Brazil.

In the two affairs of 1844 we lost a few men, but in the great one of the 31st of July, 1849, not an European or native of the regular force was even scratched, and two auxiliary savages only lost their lives while head-hunting in the jungle. It was indeed not a fight, but a night surprise, a pursuit, and a naval execution. In the work before us, the loss of the enemy, in killed, is put down at 800, which is 200 less than the estimate of the naval commander in his public despatch, and about one-half of what it was stated to be by amateurs who were present, and whose narratives were published, with illustrations, in some of the English newspapers. The statements of the battle given by these last parties reminded us of the similar, but more defensible ones of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of which the following, from old Purchas, is a fair example. Thus speaks Master John Davis, chief pilot of the 'Zelanders,' in their East India voyage in the year of Grace, 1598:

> In this great misery, it was some pleasure to see how the base Indians did flye, how they were killed, and how well they were drowned. The sea was covered with Indian heads, for they swamme away by hundreds.

In that case the Dutch ship, with her English pilot, was attacked and surprised by real pirates, the natives of Achin in Sumatra. The defeat of the assailants, therefore, was meritorious, though the language used in describing it be too bad even for the sixteenth century.

The destruction of property in all the three expeditions was on a large scale, according to the account of the victors themselves. They not only destroyed the fleets of boats at the mouths of the rivers, but for eighty and one hundred miles ascended the rivers, carrying havoc and devastation along their banks. According to the narrator of one of the expeditions of 1844—

> The habitations of 5,000 pirates had been burnt to the ground; four strong forts destroyed, together with several hundred boats.

The burning of the largest town is thus alluded to:

> The town (Patusen) was very extensive, and after being well *looted* (plundered) made a glorious blaze.

In the expedition of 1849 the following account is given of the country which was laid waste:

> The whole country on either bank of this river (called the Kanowit), is rich and fertile in the extreme. Fields of cotton, sugar-cane, and padi, with cocoanuts and fruit trees in variety, grow in the greatest luxuriance. Pigs in hundreds, ducks and poultry without number, proved that these people were robbers from choice, and not from necessity. In every house cotton looms for making cloth were found. The country at each mile improved in beauty: the scenery was varied by hill and dale, while a succession of open spaces cleared for cultivation gave evidence of a dense population, well able to enrich themselves by honest industry.

This was the country of the Sakarran, and is the locality which Sir James Brooke had visited in 1840 in a boat with four seamen, and a native escort of also one boat!

> I found this Sangi (says he in his Journal) a pleasant place, provisions plentiful and cheap, quarters comfortable, the hospitality of the host (the head of the reputed pirates) unbounded, and our dinner excellent. . . The Datu (head man) received us warmly, furnished us with a capital house and the best of cheer, and the whole party slept comfortably.

In this last case the chief was a Dyak, and in the first a Malay, Sherif Sahib, afterwards denounced as a most execrable pirate.

The author of the work before us is very liberal in his censures of certain Parliamentary orators, and says truly enough that they ought "to know what they are talking about." But unluckily his own mistakes are more numerous than those he attributes to the orators in question, and for his future guidance we shall point out a few of them. His first blunder is to mistake "an order" of the House of Commons for "a return" to that order. "A return," says he, "has been produced in Parliament from Lloyd's, showing that between thirty and forty square-rigged vessels have been plundered, captured, or molested within the last twelve years by Malay or Dyak pirates." Now even the return gives, not between thirty and forty vessels, but twenty-eight vessels, or between twenty and thirty; so that here is, at once, an exaggeration of ten ships. Out of the whole number, not one was at all "plundered, captured, or molested" by Dyaks. Thirteen out of the whole number are "missing ships," far more likely to have foundered in the typhoons of the China sea than to have been captured by Malays; for, in the last case, the remnants of their hulls, stript of their iron and copper, must sooner or later have been discovered, which they have not been. Of the remaining fifteen, five were wrecked, three burnt, and one abandoned, two plundered by Chinese, and one by the natives of the Nicobar islands, who are neither Malays nor Dyaks. Three small coasting brigs only were plundered by Malays, and not one captured by them.

Another mistake of Capt. Keppel's is of a professional character, or we should not have noticed it. He arrives at Port Carteret, in New Ireland, and informs us that it was discovered and named by "a Captain Carteret." This Captain Carteret, with the indefinite article, was the distinguished navigator and discoverer, the contemporary of Cook, whose voyage is to be found in a book of easy access, *Hawksworth's Voyages*. Then, although it is certainly not to be expected that a skilful seaman should also be a skilful naturalist, it was not necessary to give the epithet "water" to the common buffalo, seeing that there is but one buffalo in all Asia, the same familiar animal which the Saracens introduced into Southern Europe, and which may be seen almost any day in the streets of Rome. Neither ought he to have given "sparrows" and "linnets" to Borneo, since they do not exist in that island. The achievements of his Sarawak wild boar, too, that cleared a logwood fence six feet high, and within whose jaws a small child might stand erect, seem rather too much for any of the family of pigs,—at least since the days of the Calydonian boar of Ovid's Metamorphoses! To clear a six-feet fence would be a great exploit for an English hunter, but the fence ought not to have been made of "logwood," since that is a product of tropical America, and not of Asia, Africa, or even of Australia.

Again, touching the natural history of man, we have, on the faith of an un-named Dutch journal, a story of cannibalism, which the author, however, states he is "not yet able to corroborate." "The population of Endor, on the same island (Flores), is also very greedy of human flesh. But these cannibals confine themselves to the heart, which, with incredible dexterity, they extract from the body by giving one blow under the left shoulder." The native inhabitants,—not of Endor, a Dutch corruption, but—of Endé, a well-known place, are among the most simple and inoffensive of the aboriginal inhabitants of the Archipelago. The merchants of Celebes, who live among them and trade with them, and some of whom our gallant voyager met with in the roads of Batavia and Singapore, would have told him so, had he questioned them.

Once more, we are told that on a certain river not far from Sarawak, one of the scenes of the raids of the European Rajah, by virtue and protection of a fort which he has built on his neighbour's territory, there exists a population of 200,000 Dyaks, whose "fields are now under cultivation, having been untouched for years." The contrast between desolation and prosperity is here too violent. How did this agricultural population of 200,000 souls subsist "for the years" that their fields remained untouched? Assuredly not by piratical incursions on their neighbours; for if they had been engaged in forays all the while, and each foray had been successful, the miserable canoes of the savages would not have brought food enough for the tenth part of such a multitude!

Sir James Brooke takes as the model for his own course the career of the late Sir Stamford Raffles. Well, Sir Stamford was a man of unquestionable talent, of strong will, and great ambition, and Sir James is not inferior to him in any one of these qualities. But here the parallel ceases. The position of the two men is so totally different, that it is out of the power of the one to follow the career of the other. With the exception of a few spots on its outskirts, Sir Stamford Raffles' field of action was the whole Archipelago, resting on the most fertile of its islands, Java, with its docile and industrious population of six millions, with the ample revenue which it yielded. Sir James, on the contrary, is confined by public treaty and his commission to a small part of one island, and that the very worst of the large ones,—without any revenue beyond what he can get from his own principality, of about the area of a moderate English county, ninety-nine parts in a hundred of it being a primeval forest. To look, therefore, to the same results from the acts of the two men, is about as reasonable as to expect the same speed from a race-horse floundering through an Irish bog as when running over the elastic turf of Newmarket. Sir Stamford Raffles was removed from Java, and transferred to Bencoolen with the same title and powers; but he quickly discovered the difference of his position, and found that as a politician he could do little or nothing; he therefore betook himself, discreetly, to the study of natural history. The sole exception was the foundation of Singapore, a great achievement, yet a happy accident to which his enterprising spirit was driven by the barrenness of his proper locality.

That the foundation of Singapore was only a happy hit, and not the result of such sagacity and forecast as established an Alexandria, is sufficiently testified by the founder's next attempt. This consisted in the seizure and occupation of the island of Nias, on the naked, out of the way, and barren western coast of Sumatra, without harbour, or any other qualification of an emporium, and which had to be abandoned by command of his superiors almost as soon as occupied.

Our author is disposed to take a very superlative view, indeed, of the genius of Sir Stamford Raffles and Sir James Brooke, designating them as men who are produced only "once in an age." As far as we can make out his words (cloudy from excess of panegyric), he makes them heroes of "wisdom," of intelligence, and "of the spirit." We rather think, by the use of such language, he makes them only heroes of romance, if indeed he does not make them, as ordinary men, even ridiculous. Without, for the present, inquiring into the title by which Sir James Brooke obtained and has been able to hold his principality, we are bound to say that the vigour, ability, and firmness with which he rules it, and through which it has obtained a population of 50,000 inhabitants, and a trade of 20,000 tons a-year, are worthy of high commendation. He would have done better had he forborne razzias in his neighbour's territories, and confined himself to a peaceful commercial intercourse with them. "The people" (of the eastern coast of Sumatra) says Dampier, "though they are Malayans, as the rest of the country, yet they are civil enough, engaged thereto by trade: for the more trade the more civility; and, on the contrary, the less trade the more barbarity and inhumanity. For trade has a strong influence upon all people who have found the sweets of it bringing with it so many of the conveniences of life as it does." These are wise words, and the more valuable since they come from a reformed buccaneer. As to Sir Stamford Raffles, in his courageous innovations, and his often happy rashnesses, enough of fame will remain to him without converting his valuable life into a fiction. He was a man of unquestionable benevolence; and had he now been living, no man would have more loudly denounced the onslaughts on the Dyaks. Many of these people were under his rule; he described their manners, and published his description, but never called them Pirates, nor attacked them under that or any other name.

To conclude, our fussy and too often sanguinary operations on the north-western coast of Borneo have now, in one form or another, been going on for fourteen long years, and it may fairly be asked what have been their results towards the suppression of piracy over the wide field of the Archipelago? The author of the work before us informs us that piracy is pretty much as it was, and that the Dutch and Spaniards have done far more towards putting it down than ourselves. The last fact is undeniable, although neither nation has paid head-money, nor between them, shed one-tenth part of the barbarian blood that we have. Our labour, then, has still to be begun.