

THE British navy seems very likely to be once more discreditably involved in the private affairs of Sir JAMES BROOKE. This strange *employé*, above two years absent from his post, and all the while drawing salary from the British treasury, has been constantly assuring the authorities and the public that his own measures on the coast of Borneo had proved completely successful, that tranquillity reigned throughout, and that the savage hordes, heretofore addicted to piracy and head-hunting, had laid aside the spear, the sword, and the poisoned arrow, and betaken themselves to the loom, the plough, and the fishing-net. His friend, Captain KEPPEL, a recent eye-witness, has been assuring us in print that the genius of Sir JAMES, with the help, however, of rockets and paddle-wheels, had suddenly converted a nest of pirates into a peaceful community.

Unluckily for this picture of Arcadian contentment, there comes news from Borneo that there has been a brawl some seventy miles up one of the Bornean rivers, in which a young Englishman loses his life, and forthwith piracy is proclaimed, and the British navy called to the rescue; and what is strangest, the call complied with on the bare requisition of the agent of Sir JAMES BROOKE. The facts which led to the brawl with the savages, and from which the resurrection of Bornean piracy is predicated, are shortly as follows, according to the account given by the actors themselves. After the night attack of July, 1849, and the slaughter of 1,000 reputed pirates, Sir JAMES BROOKE, on his own mere motion, ordered three forts to be constructed, one at the mouth of each of the rivers, on the banks of which were located the peccant tribes of Serebas and Sakarran. These he garrisoned with a few Malays, each having its chatelain, an inexperienced English youth. "The forts," says the agent of Sir JAMES BROOKE, "were all dependent entirely on our own resources, or such as Sir James could afford them."

We pause here to ask what possible resources of their own could be possessed by mud forts, built in the mud and mangroves of the coast of Borneo. In such a situation there would be neither trade nor agriculture; and if there were resources at all, they must of necessity have been derived from tolls levied by force on the trade of the inhabitants of the interior, exacted by a virtual blockade. But, more: by what law of nature or of nations, or by what law soever, did Sir JAMES BROOKE take upon himself to build forts and garrison them in a territory not his own? It was not his—it was not British: and if it owed allegiance to any party but its native inhabitants, with whom Sir JAMES, after his victory had made peace, it was to the Sultan of Borneo, whose sanction, however, was neither obtained nor asked for. Sir JAMES'S attributes are, no doubt, multifarious and anomalous, since he is at once a sovereign prince, the tributary of a Malay prince; a British governor, a British non-resident consul, and a British commissioner to independent princes in the islands, but in not one of these incompatible capacities could he make war upon and seize an annexed foreign territory for the building and garrisoning of forts within such territory. His agent now says that Sir JAMES BROOKE has the authority of the British government for this act of aggression; but that is impossible, for the British crown has neither the power nor the inclination to

violate the law of nations; and to sanction his lawless aggression would be doing so.

There can be little doubt that the forts of Sir JAMES BROOKE, and the exactions levied at them, were the real causes which led to the squabble in which an Englishman with some of his native followers, and a good many of their opponents, lost their lives. A thousand of the reputed pirates had been slaughtered in a night, and they became, naturally enough, impatient of a thralldom to which they had patiently submitted between three and four years. A Dyak notable of the name of RENTAB, impatient of the long blockade, desires to force it, and threatens two friends of Sir JAMES BROOKE, of his own tribe, if they will not join in "a strike" against the duress of the Rajah of SARAWAK. The threatened party calls on the commandant of the fort for help. This is Mr. BRERETON, a youth of 17 or 18, who calls to his assistance the commandant of the neighbouring fort, Mr. LEE, also a youth. They ascend the river, garrison the houses of their friends, and the redoubtable RENTAB presenting himself in two boats is fired at, and runs away. The fool-hardy English youths pursue him in their cockle-shells, but at a sharp turn of the river receive a volley of spears, are assailed by four boats which they did not expect, their own are swamped, and Mr. LEE killed, with some of his followers. Strange to say, the survivors make their way to the shore by swimming, and, although unarmed and helpless, are not molested, but reach Sarawak in safety, a distance of at least 150 miles.

It is this wretched *fracas* taking place 70 or even 100 miles up a Bornean river, and plainly brought on, as even the *Times* is obliged to admit, by the imprudence of an English youth, that has been ridiculously amplified into a resumption of Malay piracy, and that has called for the interference of the British naval squadron in the Indies; which interference, according to the peculiar notions of humanity entertained by the *Times*, "means, in other words, a Nemesis business over again, and probably, this time, extermination rather than chastisement." The *Times* is not content with the slaughter of 1,000 men of a night; and his "extermination" will certainly be on a liberal scale, for the computed population of the three rivers blackmarked by Sir JAMES BROOKE is thought not to be under 80,000—man, woman, and child; a fine field for paddle-wheels, rockets, grape-shot, sniping, and decapitating. When the Hon. Captain KEPPEL, the friend and associate of Sir JAMES BROOKE, saw this population last, it was engaged in raising corn, cotton, sugar-cane, and fruits, in plying the labours of the loom, and in raising such multitudes of pigs and poultry as would gladden the hearts of the frequenters of Smithfield and Hungerford markets; but if the threat of the *Times* be carried into execution, there will be an end to all this. Most likely it will not.

The exaggerations already afloat, in order to vamp up a charge of piracy on this miserable affair in the Bornean river, are quite exemplary. The word boat, as an instance, is now never used for a Dyak canoe, nor even the tolerably familiar foreign one, *prahu*; but instead, we have the mysterious and bigger one "bangkung." We must, however, unravel the mystery. *Bangkung* is only the translation for canoe, and, according to JOHNSON, a canoe, or canoa (his authority being Sir WALTER RALEIGH), is "a boat made

by cutting the trunk of a tree into a hollow vessel." The Dyak canoe is a slight improvement on this, for over the sides of the hollowed trunk there is a single streak of planking, sewn on by ratan fibre. The gunwale midships is so near to the water, that there is danger of swamping, even from the small waves of the gentle sea-breeze. But the "bangkung," without an epithet, is not formidable enough, for there might awaken a suspicion that being after all only a canoa, it might be deemed no better than the ass in the skin of the lion. Therefore epithets of aggravation are bestowed upon it. Thus the Sarawak narrator makes it "huge" in one case, and "gigantic" in another, and the credulous and fantastic member for West Surrey, in his place in parliament, fabricated for his own use "war bangkung." Yet there was not much of war about the poor craft. According to wont, the brave RENTAB, threatening robbery on the high seas, fled at the first sound of a musket-shot, and not a shot was fired from the "huge" and "gigantic" canoes that lay in wait for their pursuers, for the plain reason that, as usual, they had no fire-arms. They hurled spears at their pursuers, and swamped their cock-boats, but this was all they could do.

According to the *Times*, not the blockade of Sir JAMES, nor the indiscretion of his adherents, has stirred up the Dyaks to resistance. JOSEPH HUME has done it all. The echo of his voice in the Commons has been heard in Serebas and Sakarran, and insurrection against the Lord of Sarawak has been the fatal consequence. We only hope the readers of the *Times* are not so credulous as their instructors. We are obliged to add, that there seem, besides the *Times*, to be two other parties of much credulity concerned—the Foreign Minister and the First Lord of the Admiralty. Until we read what passed in the House of Commons, we should no more have suspected them capable of believing in Dyak piracy than in the divine legation of MAHOMET, or the divinity of BRAHMA, or the disinterested virtues of the Rajah of SARAWAK.