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DUTCH COLONIZATION IN BORNEO.

Some time since we drew the attention of our readers to the aspect of English commerce and influence in the Indian seas. We then spoke of Borneo and Sir James Brooke's settlement at Sarawak as being admirably adapted to form a new British colony. It will be remembered also that we distinctly stated it as our conviction that immediate action on the part of the British government was necessary, in order to prevent other nations from anticipating us in a district destined to prove a grand field for commercial operations. Subsequent events have entirely verified the correctness of our views. We now learn that the Dutch are projecting a grand and comprehensive scheme, which is to embrace not only the colonization of Borneo and the contiguous islands, but also the establishment of a complete war marine in the waters of the Eastern Archipelago.

There can be no misunderstanding about this announcement. If it be true that the cabinet of Holland seriously entertains this project, our government must lose no time in taking the right steps in order to protect British interests in the East. The policy of the Dutch, as regards their colonies, is one of entire exclusion and monopoly. They will admit no rival near their throne. If the English government looks supinely on and consents to the establishment of Dutch influence in the archipelago, then may we bid farewell, for many years, to the full development of our trade with China and the Malay Islands. If, in contravention of the treaty of 1824, the Dutch be allowed to draw more closely together the bonds of interest and commerce that already exist between them and the Borneans, then will our present supremacy in the East Indian seas decay, just in proportion to the progress of the Dutch in the field of their ancient successors; then will our transactions with the Chinese be rendered subservient to the will and convenience of our inferior European power; then will exist a serious obstacle to the progress of civilization and refinement among a people eminently fitted to receive the teachings of our laws and the benefits of our social system. It was well said, at the great Liverpool congress, that England's weighty task was to civilize the world. Shall we advance that doctrine, shall we be true to our important trust, shall we be true to ourselves, if we give up Borneo and the teeming islands of the archipelago to slavery, piracy, and the Dutch?

Look to the antecedents of these people in the Indian seas. From the moment when under Houtman and Van Noort they set foot in Java and the neighbouring islands, the policy of the Netherlands has been one, not of forethought and development, but of repression, restriction, and mean avarice. No successful colony was ever established in any part of the world, or by any people, where the interests of the colonizers was held paramount to that of the native inhabitants of the place, and yet this was the course pursued by the Dutch. No wonder therefore that their early settlements in Borneo were plundered and their possessors slain; no wonder that the resources of this fine island have never been fully brought to light, no wonder that we know so little of the interior of the country, and that our intercourse with its people is confined to the dwellers on its coasts. A great problem is given us to solve: whether we are to allow the Dutch to again assert themselves in the eastern seas, or whether, in honourable rivalry, we are to establish an imperial protectorate over Sarawak, as suggested by Sir James Brooke; and so in a great measure nullify the obstructive policy of the Hollanders.

We by no means deny the right of the Dutch to colonize Borneo, but we assert our equal right to counteract the evil influences of their policy by the establishment on that island of a colony of our own. We have already shown the capability of Sarawak as a British settlement. It is important now to the English government to erect on the basis of Sir James Brooke's little government an extensive and powerful organisation. We know with what eager eyes the people of the United States look upon Japan and her sister islands. We know through recent revelations how their representative tried to pirouette with Russia, and did all in his power to obtain a mean advantage over us in China. We know that the colonial possessions of England are viewed with jealousy by all continental governments; and we know also that the integrity of those very possessions constitute our real strength among the nations. Will it be well therefore to neglect any fair opportunity that presents itself of consolidating our empire in the East? We think not.

Another aspect of the question presents itself in the pretext on which the Dutch attempt to justify their designs upon Borneo. It is said—with what truth we know not—that the people of Sumatra (the most westerly island of the Malasian group, and next to Borneo in extent and importance) are given to piracy, cannibalism, and other hideous offences against commerce and humanity. Under the pretext of suppressing these practices, the Dutch propose to take complete possession of the south-western coast of Borneo, the richest island in the world. A bad excuse, says the old proverb, is better than none; so we will, for the moment, allow that this view of the case is the correct one. But shall this pretence—true or false, as the case may be—prevent our government from asserting its rights in the most prolific region of the earth? At the expense of a direct falsification of the law of nations, the Dutch are presumed to aim at a supremacy in the eastern seas inimical to our interests in India and China. We have no manner of objection to their attempting to re-establish their empire in the Malay Islands, but we do most seriously urge upon the government the necessity for taking immediate steps to protect British interests in these distant regions. In Sarawak we already possess the nucleus of a great colony; the manifest advantages derivable from a more extended system of commerce and a more close political relation with the people of Borneo need scarcely be enumerated. From our little settlement at the mouth of the river Brumé might radiate the arms of an extensive colony. Left unprotected and uncared for, our trade with the green islands of the Indian Ocean cannot but decline and die. Shall we, quietly and without a struggle, give up to the Dutch the entire productions of the beautiful islands that form, as it were, a natural concomitant to India and Australia? Shall we depend on Dutch vessels for the supply of the spices, drugs, timber, cereals, and minerals with which these islands are known to abound? Shall we not rather enter into honourable compact with the new colonists, and secure for ourselves a share—a large but not an unequal share—in the valuable productions of this invaluable group? The time has arrived when all the advantages that accrue to successful colonization in a hitherto little known district are open to our acceptance. If we neglect this opportunity of acquiring a more secure footing in the eastern seas, we may possibly leave to our children a legacy of diplomatic dispute and armed intervention. It is for the government of Lord Derby to choose between these alternatives.