

*Adventures among the Dyaks of Borneo.* By Frederick Boyle, F.R.G.S. Hurst and Blackett.

Mr Boyle and his brother went to Sarawak in the summer, and spent a few months in wandering through the known and unknown parts of Borneo, making it their chief business, it seems, to study the character of its inhabitants and note their habits and feelings from personal experience among all classes of the people; to observe the nature of the country and enjoy such sport as it offered. The result of their undertaking is set forth in this light and entertaining volume, written with very little system, and certainly not overloaded with solid information, but rich in pleasant gossip and amusing details about the far-off island, which, after all we have heard of Rajah Brooke and his associates, is already tolerably familiar to Englishmen.

The Dyaks, among whom these travellers spent most of their time, appear to hold intermediate place, as regards civilization, between the aboriginal and semi-human Pakatans, who are "only wild beasts" in the judgment of their neighbours, and the Malays, who were recent settlers in the island. There are two varieties of them; the Hill Dyaks occupying the chief part of the interior of Sarawak proper, and the Sea Dyaks, scattered over the coast and on the banks of large rivers. The former are poor, industrious, and peaceable, not to say cowardly. The latter are of much fiercer disposition.

The great tribes of Sakarran and Seribas have never been more than nominally subject to the Malays of Kuching or Bruni, and Sir James Brooke is the first master whom they have really obeyed. Every year a cloud of murderous pirates issued from their rivers and swept the adjacent coasts. No man was safe by reason of his poverty or insignificance, for human heads were the booty sought by these rovers, and not wealth alone. Villages were attacked in the

dead of night, and every adult cut off; the women and grown girls were frequently slaughtered with the men, and children alone were preserved to be the slaves of the conqueror. Never was warfare so terrible as this; head-hunting, a fashion of comparatively modern growth, became a mania which spread like a horrible disease over the whole land. No longer were the trophies regarded as proofs of individual valour; they became the indiscriminate property of the clan, and were valued for their number alone. Murder lurked in the jungle and on the river; the aged of the people were no longer safe among their own kindred, and corpses were secretly disinterred to increase the grisly store. Superstition soon added its ready impulse to the general movement. The aged warrior could not rest in his grave till his relatives had taken a head in his name; the maiden disdained the weak-hearted suitor whose hand was not yet stained with some cowardly murder.

Mr Boyle is a devout believer in Sir James Brooke. Gasing, the chief of the Sakarran, the most powerful tribe of Dyaks, is, we are told, a great supporter of the Rajah's government. "So long as he and his officers shall rule over this country," he said at a clan-meeting attended by Mr Boyle, "I know that they will govern it wisely and well, and so long will I and my people live in peace and loyalty. But if the white men leave us, no Malay shall command the Dyaks of Sakarran. I will assemble my warriors as in the former days; we will restore the old alliances, and our hills shall be defended against all comers." Gasing's Dyaks, in their transformed condition as true believers in the great Rajah, are not very far short of perfection. "Their minds are healthy as their bodies, theft and brawling and adultery, fruitful sources of disturbance in refined Europe, are unknown to them; their houses are comfortable, and small labour procures for them the means of life in abundance; in war they are fearless, and no domestic anxiety harasses their intervals. They are manly, hospitable, honest, kindly, and humane to a degree which well might shame ourselves." But in one respect all the reformation has yet to be effected. The missionaries have failed to make the least impression upon the Dyaks; and, from a religious point of view, they are still utterly benighted heathen; so benighted that they have not even any religion of their own. "Some of them," says Mr Boyle, "recognize an equivalent for the Allah of the Mussulmans, in the word Tugay or Tupay; but when we inquired who this being was, what his character, whether good or evil, how far he felt an interest in human affairs, or like questions, the answer was an indifferent expression of ignorance. All the Dyaks are alike careless in regard to religion, to the Deity, and to immortality. They believe that certain warriors of their own or another tribe have become *antus*, or wood-devils, after death, but whether this fate overtook them for good or evil actions, whether it is to be considered as a reward or a punishment, they neither know nor care."

This religious apathy seems to pervade all classes of Dyaks, as well as some other races or peoples in Borneo, among whom the Kennowits are in many ways remarkable; but few of them are as honest and well-behaved as the Sakarran Dyaks, under Gasing's government. Many tribes are yet in open or suppressed resistance to Sir James Brooke, who has been more sparing lately of his gunpowder. Mr Boyle, however, considers the Dyaks, even at their worst, superior to the Malays, about whom, as well as about many other topics of his volume, other travellers have recorded differing opinions and experiences; the most notable record of all being in Mr St John's 'Life in the Forests of the Far East.'