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RAJAH BROOKE. (From Temple Bar.)

In describing the person of Sir James Brooke and his character—so far as a daily intercourse of some months could enable one to understand it—I cannot be accused of breaking the canons of good taste. Such men as he belong to history. Not lightly is the smallest detail of their appearance or of their nature to be regarded, for future ages will read with interest of the one, and will weigh the other with profit. Of faults, every great character has its share, perhaps in a larger ratio than the common clay, but very few have been those to whom so little of small human weakness could be charged as to the Rajah of Sarawak.

His was not the stature of a demi-god, nor the stately presence of the ancient heroes. His height was scarcely 5ft. 9in., his figure, though wiry and muscular beyond the common, was slender in its proportions. The well-known portrait of Sir Francis Grant gives, perhaps, a fair likeness of the rajah in his youth; but with advancing years the lines of strength around the jaw, the keen resolution in the eyes, grew yet more apparent. Handsome he was, with that manlike and imposing beauty which strikes men and women alike, but not handsome by regularity of feature. His mouth seemed cut in stone, and his eyes—pleasantly though they shone when he presided at those charming dinners at Government House, faded by the Tuan Muda (C. Johnson-Brooke), and surrounded by an ever-changing circle of out-station officers, whose home, in their rare visits to the capital, was always at the rajah's house—

never seemed wholly to lose that stern and steady gaze acquired in looking upon scenes of red-handed justice and retribution. But he was the pleasantest companion in this world, this "successful buccaneer," as Mr. Hume called him—this kindly gentleman, as those who saw and knew entitled him. Gentle always, whatever the age or class of his companion; equally at home with a rude Dyak or with the belle of the season. None were afraid of him. His learning was most extensive, his readiness of wit and power of expression equally delightful. The eloquence of Rajah Brooke in public I need not dwell upon; many heard him in England, and to those who had not that pleasure I can only declare that very few of our orators reached his level, and scarce any surpassed it. The sole quality in regard to conversation which the rajah lacked was the sense of humour, of which indeed he had but little. Yet a paradox boldly enunciated was a favourite form of thought with him, as when he said one evening: "If the fate of any man in the world has been a series of lucky chances, mine has been so. My wound in India was luck; my retirement from the army was luck; my cruise in the Royalist was luck; the rebellion here, the helplessness of Mudah Hassim, the insolence of the Pangarans, the murderous attempt of Makota, the massacre of the Bruni nobles, and my whole career in Sarawak, has been a chain of luck. But I don't believe in any such thing!"

It may be that, when young, Rajah Brooke indulged in the follies and vices common to men of great energy; but his Eastern life was passed, from the very outset to its end, without suspicion of a stain. And this fact gave him the greater influence among a people so sensual, so utterly unconscious of morality, as is the Malay. The chaste Dyaks looked with enthusiastic approbation at the household of their sovereign, governed, for the first time in Sarawak history, by one who seized no man's goods, nor carried off his daughters; and they often pointed out to Malay visitors, I fear with little effect, how nobly their own favourite monarch set the example of decency and order.

Of that usual religion which one may term superstitious, the rajah, like most, if not all, of strong and energetic natures, had but little. His pure life, his unflinching pursuit of duty, were the result of no dogmatic injunctions blindly and with trembling accepted, but the logical conclusion of thought and observation. The origin of dogmatic creeds, and the result of them, was a favourite subject with his mind; nor was there any speculation so preposterous but he would give it a few moments of attention, overthrowing it with gentle and logical ridicule, or gravely demonstrating its inconsistency. Almost the only occasions on which I have seen the rajah heartily laugh were in listening to the ingenious sophistries of a young visitor who made his appearance in Sarawak some years ago, and who seemed specially to occupy a fanciful mind in devising new and more monstrous systems of heresy day by day for the entertainment of his host and himself. He hated, above all things, priestcraft. The surrender of their own intellect, the admission that another person could possibly, by virtue of any circumstance outside of his own merits, stand on a level above common humanity, is to such men as he an intolerable idea. And in this respect it would be pushing to an unreasonable point the doctrine of privacy to avoid all mention of the Sarawak church and its officers. It has been regretted that men as upright and conscientious as were the Rajah of Sarawak and the Bishop of Labuan could not have dwelt together upon terms of greater friendship; but I feel convinced that Dr. M'Dougal, whatever his small failings, was better adapted to his delicate position than nine in ten among the clergy of England, as they now are, who might have aspired to his see. Each respected the other, if he had no enthusiastic liking; but the ordinary parson—such an one, for instance, as he who wrote to the powerful chief of Lundu that all his ancestors were now raging in hell for the sin of taking human heads in the time of their barbarism—would have outraged the whole population to madness, Chinese, Malay, and Dyak *en masse*. Such cruel and senseless orthodoxy Dr. M'Dougal was too wise to entertain, or too prudent to exhibit; and if it be true that Mr. Chambers, of Banting, has accepted the post the former has resigned, we may congratulate Mr. Charles Johnson-Brooke, now rajah, upon the appointment of a bishop who will pursue the wise policy of conciliation introduced by his predecessor, without the unfortunate weakness which, in some measure, impaled Dr. M'Dougal's efficiency.

Of Sir James Brooke's personal courage it is not necessary to speak; but to this quality he added a skill in the use of all weapons, and a quickness of eye and limb which were quite extraordinary. To the moment when paralysis struck him down for the first time, the rajah had few equals in that rapid and vigorous fence, which is really of service in a struggle, nor in real pistol play. There are many men, it is likely, who could out the pips of a card more accurately, but I never saw one who was the rajah's match in firing all round, in front in rear, running, or wheeling about. That most treacherous weapon, the revolver, was sure as a duelling pistol in his hands. When the Chinese rebels came down to Kuching, on the night of February 18, 1857, their first object was to surround Government House, with the intention of killing the sovereign. They knew that he and his body-servant were alone in the building, for it was not customary before this event to post any sentinels either by night or day. The Chinese force was over 3,000, and half of this number marched in silence through the darkness to the attack. They fired the building, and stood in wait for their victim, yelling and wasting their powder after the usual Chinese manner. Half of them were drunk; all were thirsting for the rajah's blood. But so terrible was the prestige surrounding him, so deeply founded the belief in his miraculous skill, that when the object of their hatred sprang through a window from the blazing house, with a pistol in each hand and a sabre between his teeth, the 1,500 burly Chinamen shrank from his desperate path, and, without a word, he dashed through a living lane of intended murderers. He reached the stream that fenced the residence gardens, pursued by the cowardly host, plunged in, dived beneath the sampans lying there, and rose among the bushes on the farther bank. But as he rose, another peril loomed over him, for a dark figure stooped above his hiding-place, and eager eyes were examining the water. One hasty glance assured the rajah that this new foe was all alone; he sprang in one tremendous bound at the bent throat, and shortened his sabre to finish the work. But a strangled voice gurgled forth—"It's I, sir—Penty, sir! Oh, for God's sake, Sir James!" The rajah was fond of telling this story, and Penty, his steward, a stalwart west countryman, always grinned from ear to ear in listening to it, and invariably wound up the final with an inconsequential "Yes, sir."

The Dyaks also, among whom wrestling is a favourite pastime, had a notion that their rajah was more than a match for the most skillful champions. Whether there was any ground for this idea, or how it came to be acce-

pted, I cannot tell; but most surely Sir James Brooke had never entered the lists with their naked warriors. It may be that in some early struggle, when the leader of the Sarawak forces had to take hand-to-hand part in every action, the Dyaks saw him successfully disarm an antagonist by this means, and thence the opinion spread. One evening, shortly after the Kyan war was ended, Mr. Stuart Johnson, third and youngest of the rajah's nephews who have joined his fortunes, brought down a guest to Government House, in the person of Joke, a Kenowit chieftain of great importance somewhere on the Rejang river. This warrior, who had much distinguished himself in the late campaign, was very short, but immensely powerful, and a noted champion at all weapons and all games. Mr. Stuart Johnson and Mr. Orulshank, residents of Kenowit, each tried a fall with him, but he threw them easily. The rajah happened to enter the room just as I asked Joke whether there was any Englishman in the country who could match him with the sword or in wrestling. "No one but the rajah," he said, looking at his sovereign with a curious expression of mingled worship and curiosity in his small, shifting eyes. "Why, I am old and very thin, Joke," said Sir James, smiling. "So is the rattan," answered the Kenowit, quick as thought. An extreme readiness of comparison and allegory is characteristic of all Oriental peoples.

The rajah's temper was always under control, and he did nothing upon impulse. Perhaps this was not so in his youth; but endless responsibilities, disappointments innumerable, and the habit of danger, had brought his mind to the calm equanimity of age long before the years began to weigh heavily. Two recollections only, so far as I observed, roused anger in his breast. The conduct of England upon several occasions he sometimes denounced with just indignation; but that is not precisely what I mean. One of the stories which never failed to bring the light of passion into his stern eyes was the massacre of Bruni in 1846, when the cowardly sultan murdered those six Pangarans, uncles of his own, who favoured Rajah Brooke and the English alliance. They died with a heroism befitting their cause; two, at least, blowing up their houses, their harems and families, when resistance grew hopeless. One of them was that Mudah Hassim who had put Sir James on the throne of Sarawak. The other occasion was at a dinner party in the bishop's house, when conversation had turned upon the qualities of the British sailor. Dr. M'Dougal, as became his office, loudly claimed for our tars all those virtues which Mr. T. P. Cooke assumed to be their invariable attribute; others ridiculed this egotism of nationality. The rajah then told a story which fixed itself very deeply in my recollection. The incident happened in one of those forays which he undertook in English vessels of war—I think to Sulu, but my memory of the time and place is, I confess, not very accurate. At least there must be many officers now living who can, if they will, recall the circumstance. The piratical village attacked was strongly fortified, and, in especial, an enormous boom had been laid across the entrance of the bay. This obstruction was found to be most difficult of removal, and while the boats of the expedition hacked and sawed at the timber, they were exposed to a murderous fire from batteries planted in judicious spots. Men fell very thickly, and the force was almost demoralised by its helplessness and loss, when the boom suddenly broke. With mad shouts of vengeance our sailors dashed to shore, but the pirates, after one parting volley, fled through the woods to another position. Rajah Brooke, leading the men in pursuit, looked into a hut, and saw there two very little children abandoned by their parents. Knowing the humour of the sailors, and having very little faith in the T. P. Cooke theory, he detached two men who were considered trustworthy to protect the helpless little pirates. He personally saw them take their post, then followed the attacking force. But when the victors returned, the guards were gone, and the children lay dead upon the floor, with their necks nearly severed. There was an inquiry, of course, but the criminal could not be discovered; the men in charge had deserted their post, leaving the children in safety, as they declared. There was no auxiliary of any kind at hand. The matter was hushed up. I do not hesitate to repeat this story, because there must be many still alive who can give the place and date I have forgotten.

On the rajah's defects we may touch very lightly. A certain want of softness there was in his nature; a certain self-confidence, which, most justly founded as it was, caused him to feel a polite but profound indifference for the opinion of other persons. One cannot but own also, with all the enthusiastic devotion which we who knew him felt for him, that he exhibited sometimes that last weakness of a noble mind, jealousy of others' success in the objects which his ambition sought—not the small and mean ends which weaker natures often show, but, as I understand, a grander feeling. For rank and wealth and success in life he had a careless indifference too deep for expression; but in the great work of civilising the Farther East, Sir James Brooke would have wished, I think, that the forms of Imperial Rome could be restored, and each great act in that direction be performed under his "numen." But he was aware of this weakness, as of all others in his character, and guarded himself strictly against it. No ruler was more carefully just to the merits of his subordinates, and he brought out the services of any distinguished officer with scrupulous self-denial. After all, the view was just, that the Oriental seas owed all to Sarawak and its rajah. He first, by untiring energy of sword and tongue and pen brought before the shocked comprehension of Europe the atrocities daily perpetrated in the Malayan seas. He showed an incredulous world that the piratical fleets of Sulu, Balanini, Illanun, Seribas, and countless others, were not merely legends of the profession, like flying Dutchmen and Krakens and great sea-serpents, but actual realities under which the eastern coasts and waters were suffering to-day, yet more horribly than we ten centuries ago. It was with amazement that England read the dispassionate figures of Rajah Brooke, which estimated the number of pirates who annually swept the shore of Borneo alone at 50,000 men; and could he but have put before the public the story of one day's employment with these fiends—the murders committed for murder's sake, the rapes, the burnings, the ruin, every outrage deepened by slow and ingenious torture, without pretext or object, all Europe would have thrilled with such horror and astonishment as never yet the tale of any crime has roused. And because he made these things known, and put his whole fortune, his energies, his life itself, at the work of redressing these terrible things, therefore I hold that Rajah Brooke might justly claim some credit in each action that had his object at heart. But there was a certain grim levity about his manner of speaking on these matters, which showed to the observant mind how very deep his purpose lay at heart, as when he excused his severity against the Seribas pirates by declaring that, "as a gentleman, he could not allow such goings on upon his property."—Article: "The Career and Character of Rajah Brooke."