

HEAD HUNTERS.—At first the time of the music was slow, but by degrees it grew quicker and louder, until all sang as fast and loud as they could. The dancing warriors became more excited and flourished their cleavers and leaped to and fro with all their might, until, as one of our company remarked, their eyes were like fire. It was easy to understand that in such a state of temporary madness they would no more hesitate to cleave off a head than to cut down a bamboo. They are far-famed "head hunters." It is a custom that has become a law among them that every young man must at least cut off one human head before he can marry. Heads, therefore, are in great demand, and perhaps our realisation of this fact made these frenzied savages appear the more shocking specimens of humanity. The head of a child will meet the inexorable demands of this bloody law, but the head of a woman is preferred, because it is supposed she can more easily defend herself or escape; for the same reason the head of a man is held in higher estimation, and the head of a white man is a proof of the greatest bravery, and therefore the most glorious trophy. On the north coast, near Sawai Bay, the Dutch, a few years ago, had a war with these natives, and when they had driven them to the mountains they found in their huts between two and three times as many human skulls as it is probable there were people in the whole village, men, women, and children taken together. When a man is afraid to go out on such a hunt alone, he invites or hires two or three others to assist him, and all lie in wait near a neighbouring village until some one chances to pass by, when they spring out and dispatch their victim and escape. This, of course, creates a deadly enmity between each tribe and every other near it, and the whole interior of the eastern half of the island, where this head hunting prevails, is one unchanging scene of endless, bloody strife. The same custom prevails over the greater part of the interior of Borneo, among many tribes known as Dyaks, the Malay word for "savage." There only the heads of men are valued, and new ones must be obtained to celebrate every birth and funeral, as well as marriage. I have seen a necklace of human teeth made in that island by those people. Small holes had been drilled in several scores of them, which were then strung on a wire long enough to pass two or three times round the neck of the hero who wore it. When a head is secured the brains are taken out, and it is placed over a fire to be smoked and dried. During this process the muscles of the face contract and change the features until they assume a most ghastly grimace.—*Travels in the East Indian Archipelago.* By Albert S. Bickmore, M.A.