

for the information and at the request of the Hon. Sir T. S. Raffles.]

The present religion of the Battas is a compound of the most ridiculous and barbarous superstitions, founded on human depravity. They do not, however, worship images, but believe in the existence of certain deities, whose attributes bespeak the existence of a better race of people than the present. Their names and descriptions are as follow:

*Dec Bath assee assee*, the creator and father of all—who appointed three brothers—Batragourou, Seeree Padah, and Mahalabhoulan his Va-keels or agents, to instruct mankind.

*Bataragourou* is the God of Justice, and is described literally under the following character: "Fish in the wears he will restore to their element, property forgotten, he will return; a measure filled to the brim, a just balance and upright judgment are his."

These are the principles Bataragourou was appointed to instil into the minds of mankind, but the Battas acknowledge themselves strangers to their adoption.

*Seeree Padah* is the God of Mercy: "Ho will repair the clothes that are torn—give meat to the hungry—drink to the thirsty—heal the sick—relieve the oppressed—give advice to the weak, and shelter to the friendless."

*Mahalabhoulan* soon quarrelled with his brothers, separated from them, and set up the practice of tenets directly opposite to theirs;—hence he is described as—"The source of discord and contention,—the instigator of malice and revenge,—the enciter of anger, —the source of fraud, deceit, lying, hypocrisy, and murder."

Of these three brothers, you will not wonder that the last is most powerful, or that he has most adherents. The Battas acknowledge that they apply to, and beseech him, when they have followed any of those vices, and they also acknowledge that petitions are very rarely offered to the other Deities. They name a fish, "*Nig-gah padouah*," the Atlas who is said to support the world, which they describe to consist of seven folds beneath, and as many above.

A person named "*Dattoo*," who is skilled in every sort of superstition, is the only resemblance of a priest among them. Every village has one. The only ceremony practised of a religious nature, as far as I can hear, is the custom of invoking the shades of their ancestors. This is done at pleasure, in prosperity and adversity. The process of the ceremony is as follows.

A wooden mask is made intended to represent the features of the deceased; this is worn by a clever fellow, who is dressed in all the regalia of a Rajah, and he is worshipped as the living representative of the departed object of their regard.

A feast is made in honour of the dead, which lasts for three days. The performer exercises all the authority that his skill suggests, and mixes his sayings with prophecies suited to the wishes of his audience.

The influence of the *Dattoo* over the deluded Battas is such, that they will engage in no undertaking, however trifling, without first consulting him. He expounds all their religious books, and according to his interpretation, a day is chosen as propitious to their object, whether that be a suit, a journey, or war.

Of the moral conduct of these people, it grie-

ves me to say, that it appears to be influenced by all the vile passions of an irregular and irritable constitution. Truth is seldom regarded, when in the way of the interests or feelings: and honesty is never founded on principle, but on the fear of detection. The general tenor of their lives has obliterated the recollection and practice of the laws of Seeree Padah, and Bataragourou, and they have no Priesthood, no Rajah to recal them, or to reprove their obstinate adherence to the principles of Mahalabhoulan, who is certainly no other than the devil.

I am sure, adds Mr. Prince in concluding his account, that christian Missionaries would find a good field for their labours among this people; for it is not ignorance of what is virtuous and good, but, as they themselves acknowledge, *natural depravity*, that must be assigned as the principal cause of their present deplorable morals.

An extract of a letter from Mr. Evans to a friend at Hammorsmith, dated Padang, throws some light upon the moral condition of the Malays, and proves that they need an acquaintance with the gospel, not only to rectify their gross mistakes respecting the nature of a future life, but to instruct them how to conduct themselves with propriety in this.

"You are no doubt aware that all the Malays are Musselmans. But it is only part of the peculiarities of religion of the false prophet, and those the most exceptionable, that they have an acquaintance with. They are in a state of most deplorable ignorance, destitute of almost every kind of knowledge. It is true they have the name of being civilized, but from all I can observe, their condition to say the very best of it, is semi-barbarism. Of science they know nothing, of the useful arts they know very little, and what is worse than all, they appear to have no wish to improve. Their indolence is almost beyond credibility. With a few exceptions, if they can obtain rice and the betel nut to chew, they will sit down in their houses the whole of their time without feeling the least inclination to seek employment.

Those who work at any kind of handicraft (and miserable workmen they are) will exert themselves no farther than to get a bare subsistence. Money will not stimulate them, entreaty will have no influence, threatening will not avail, and so deeply interwoven with their very nature does this indolent disposition appear, that were it not for the doctrine of the *new birth*, I should have no hope of their cordially embracing Christianity. I should conclude that if no other part of the religion of the blessed Jesus were opposed to their inclinations and taste, the active duties it enjoins would fill their souls with an unconquerable aversion to it."

#### SELECT SENTENCES.

When a man owns himself to be in an Error, he does but tell you in other words, that he is wiser than he was.

Truth often suffers more from the heat of its Defenders, than from the arguments of its Opposers.

Never doth reason show itself more reasonable, than when it ceaseth to reason about things above reason.

Dare to tell true; nothing can need a lie: The fault that needs it most, grows two thereby.

Truth alone, without eloquence, is sufficiently powerful and persuasive, and stands in need of no studied and artificial practices to vindicate and recommend it.

Sincerity is to speak as we think; to do as we pretend and profess; to perform and make good what we promise; and really to be what we would seem and appear to be.

A great man, on a certain affair, being asked by Hellogabalus, How he durst be so plain? Because, said he, I dare die: I can but die, if I speak the truth; and I must die, if I flatter.

A woman of true sense will always be ambitious, not of gaining admiration, but of deserving it.

We are never well informed of the Truth, till we are conformed to the Truth.

#### THE JOK OF NATURE;

OR

#### THE SHEPHERD AND THE PHILOSOPHER.

Remote from cities liv'd a swain,  
Unweav'd with all the cares of gam,  
His head was silver'd o'er with age,  
And long experience made him sage;  
In summer's heat, and winter's cold,  
He fed his flock, and penn'd the fold;  
His hours in cheerful labour flow,  
Nor envy nor ambition knew.  
His wisdom and his honest fame  
Thro' all the country rais'd his name.

A deep philosopher (whose rules  
Of moral life were drawn from schools)  
The Shepherd's homely cottage sought,  
And thus explor'd his reach of thought.  
"Whence is thy learning? hath thy toil  
O'er books consum'd the midnight oil?  
Hast thou old Greece and Rome survey'd,  
And the vast sense of Plato weigh'd?  
Hath Socrates thy soul refin'd,  
And hast thou fathom'd Tully's mind?  
Or, like the wise Ulysses, thrown,  
By various fates, to realms unknown;  
Hast thou thro' many cities stray'd,  
Their customs, laws and manners, weigh'd?"

The Shepherd modestly reply'd,  
"I ne'er the paths of learning try'd;  
Nor have I roam'd in foreign parts,  
To read mankind, their laws, and arts;  
For man is practis'd in disguise,  
He cheats the most discerning eyes.  
Who by that search shall wiser grow?  
By that, ourselves we never know.  
The little knowledge I have gain'd,  
Was all from simple NATURE drain'd;  
Hence my life's maxims took their rise,  
Hence grew my settled hate to vice.

The daily labours of the bee  
Awak'd my soul to industry.  
Who can observe the careful ant,  
And not provide for future want?  
My dog (the trustiest of his kind)  
With gratitude instills my mind:  
I mark his true, his faithful way,  
And in my service copy Tray.  
In constancy and nuptial love,  
I learn my duty from the dove;  
The hen, whom from the chulky air,  
With pious wing protects her care,  
And every fowl that flies at large,  
Instruct me in a parent's charge.

"From NATURE too I take my rule,  
To shun contempt and ridicule.  
I never, with important air,  
In conversation overbear.  
Can grave and formal pass for wise,  
When men the solemn owl despise?  
My tongue within my lips I rein;  
For who talks much must talk in vain.  
We from the wordy torrent fly,  
Who listens to the chattering pye?  
Nor would I, with felonious flight,  
By stealth invade my neighbour's right.  
Rapacious animals we hate;  
Kites, hawks, and wolves, deserve their fate.  
Do not we just abhorrence find  
Against the toad and serpent kind?  
But Envy, Calumny, and spite,  
Bear stronger venom in their bite.

Thus every object of creation  
Can furnish hints to Contemplation;  
And, from the most minute and mean,  
A virtuous mind can morals glean."

"Thy fame is just," the Sage replies;  
Thy virtue proves thee truly wise.  
Pride often guides the author's pen  
Books as affected are as men:  
But He who studies Nature's Laws,  
From certain Truth His Maxims draws.