*coup de proce.”@@1* Such details present a shocking picture of the ferocious habits of these worse than savages ; and few will, after this, be inclined to listen to Sir Stamford’s praise, that “ they are honest and honourable, and possess many more virtues.” It seems an abuse of the name of virtue to couple it with such brutalities.

Till about 150 years ago, the southern coast of Sumatra was dependent on the king of Bantam, whose deputy col­lected the tribute of pepper, and filled up any vacancies in the magistracy, by nominating new functionaries, or con­firming those already chosen. Soon after this time the English established a settlement at Bencoolen, and the de­puty of the king of Bantam informed the chiefs that he should visit them no more ; and raising two chief men to the supreme potver, be gave into their hands the government of the country, and withdrew his master’s claim. The in­terior of the country is ruled by princes or chiefs. Near the sea-coast it is much influenced by the Europeans, who are virtually the rulers; but the influence of the East India Company’s residents never extended to any distance in the interior, which was indeed not known until it was explored in 1818 by Sir Stamford Raffles. In the districts adjacent to the coast the power of the resident was exerted for the benefit of the people. He has always been considered their protector from the injustice and oppression of their chiefs. By fraud and legal chicanery, though not by open acts of violence, they take advantage of the ignorant and neces­sitous, and contrive to strip them of their property, their fa­mily, and their liberty. To prevent these iniquitous prac­tices, the perversion of justice in consequence of bribes, the subornation of witnesses, and such like practices, the resi­dent’s authority has always been useful ; and when it is ac­cidentally relaxed, oppression and disorders ensue.

The British settlement at Bencoolen has however been the scene of great disorders, arising from the mal-adrnini- stration of the residents sent thither by the Company. Al­though it was one of the first establishments formed by the Company in the east, it had benefited less than any other part of the country under their control. The establish­ment formed was solely for the purpose of procuring pep­per, in a country deficient in population, and in a new and unappropriated soil, which could only be rendered produc­tive by capital and industry. The expenses of the establish­ment amounted to L.100,000 per annum, the returns were only a few tons of pepper. On the first formation of their settlements on the coast of Sumatra, the Company held the native chiefs bound to compel their subjects each to culti­vate a certain number of pepper vines, the produce to be delivered exclusively to the Company’s agents, at a price far below the value of the labour employed in the cultivation. For a certain time, while the influence of the chiefs con­tinued, the stipulated quantity of pepper was delivered to the agents ; but the oppression soon began to be heavily felt ; the cultivators withheld their labour, and the chiefs, destitute of the power to force it, left to the Company’s agents the cruel task of driving the people to their unpro­fitable toil. Prior to 1801, the establishment maintained at Fort Marlborough was considerable ; and the private trade of Bencoolen, carried on by the governor and council, and the servants of the Company, was extensive, and contribut­ed to the improvement of the settlement. The trade con­sisted in the importation of articles from Western India, which were principally exported to the Java market. From the restrictive policy of the Dutch government, and the corruption of its servants, a contraband trade had arisen, which was carried on, particularly that portion of it which consisted in opium and piece-goods, through the medium of Bencoolen. In 1801 the original establishment of Fort

Marlborough was reduced, and it became a dependency of Bengal ; and a strictly economical and purer system of ad­ministration being introduced by Mr Parr, the resident, great reductions took place in all the public establishments, by which numbers of people were suddenly thrown out of employment, and many reduced to starvation. At the same time, contracts were entered into for a certain quantity of labour, to be employed in the cultivation of pepper, and the pepper plantations were farmed out to the Company’s ser­vants; and, that the resident might have an interest in for­cing the people to cultivate pepper, he was allowed one dollar per cwt. on the quantity delivered to government. Along with pepper, Mr Parr endeavoured to enforce the cultiva­tion of coffee ; and a long series of measures, offensive to the natives, was also carried into effect. Insults were of­fered to the principal chiefs, which produced a deep feeling on men of violent and vindictive tempers ; and the attempt to compel the cultivation of coffee brought matters to a crisis. A deep-laid plot was formed for vengeance; the measures of the government were fully discussed ; secret oaths were administered, and the revolt soon after broke out. The government-house was surrounded, the guards were overpowered, and the resident, blind to his danger, was murdered. The measures that followed were dictated by the spirit of revenge. It was thought unsafe to touch the chiefs ; but several of the people were blown from the mouths of guns. Every village within a certain distance was consigned to the flames, and the country was laid waste, as if it were intended to surround the settlement with a desert. For its protection, the fruit-trees, venerable from age, and considered as the tutelary deities of the place, and their destruction an act of sacrilege, were cut down ; every thing that could afford shelter was levelled with the ground, and the inhabitants were turned loose upon the country, forbidden to appear with krises, and degraded by every stigma that jealousy could devise. Of 1000 head of cattle possessed by one village, only 300 remained in 1820, the rest being either stolen, shot, or dispersed.

In 1818, when Sir Stamford Raffles landed at Bencoolen as lieutenant-governor, he beheld nothing but dilapidation and ruin ; the roads impassable, the highways overrun with rank grass, the government-house a den of ravenous dogs and polecats. As the chief revenue of the government was derived from gaming and cock-fighting farms, these immoral practices were publicly patronized by it. The consequence was, that there was no security either for person or property ; murders and robberies were daily committed, and never detected ; and the grossest profligacy was seen in every direction. The new governor, with that rare union of wisdom and benevolence which so eminently qualified him for a legislator, immediately commenced mea­sures of reform. The African slaves who were employed in the hard work of the colony, and who were dissolute and depraved, and their children in a state of vice and wretched­ness, were declared free before an assembly of native chiefs ; the forced cultivation of pepper was abolished ; the people were allowed as formerly to wear krises and other weapons, according to immemorial usage. The gaming and cock- fighting farms, so destructive of every principle of good government, social order, or morals, were abolished ; and various reforms of other evils equally mischievous were car­ried into effect. Under the wise, beneficent, and enlighten­ed rule of Sir Stamford Raffles, it is scarcely necessary to add, that the country, the revenue, the trade, and the mo­rals of the people, began to improve. He was a rare ex­ample of true disinterestedness and patriotism. The object of his life was the happiness of the people under his sway ; his wisdom suggested the means ; and the eminent success

@@@■ Memoir of the Life and Services of Sir Stamford Raffles, p. 426.