

much if they had been fired off for years, and many of the houses built upon the water would require to be pulled down before these guns could be brought to bear upon any thing on the side of the bay, supposing them to be in a good condition; a little farther to the east of the town, I was informed they had a kind of stockade, but none of us were permitted to see it.

According to our estimates, and the information we received while at Sooloo, the island itself does not contain more than thirty thousand inhabitants, of which the town of Soung may have six or seven thousand. The whole group may number about one hundred and thirty thousand. I am aware, however, that it is difficult to estimate the population of a half-civilized people, who invariably exaggerate their own strength; and visiters are likewise prone to do the same thing. The Chinese comprise about an eighth of the population of the town, and are generally of the lower class. They are constantly busy at their trades, and intent upon making money.

At Soung, business seems active, and all, slaves as well as masters, seem to engage in it. The absence of a strong government leaves all at liberty to act for themselves, and the Ruma Bechara gives unlimited freedom to trade. These circumstances promote the industry of the community, and even that of the slave, for he too, as before observed, has a life interest in what he earns.

Soung being the residence of the Sultan, as well as the grand depôt for all piratical goods, is probably more of a mart than any of the surrounding towns. In the months of March and April it is visited by several Chinese junks, who remain trading until the beginning of the month of August. If delayed after that time, they can scarcely return in safety, being unable to contend with the boisterous weather and head winds that then prevail in the Chinese seas. These junks are said to come chiefly from Amoy, where the cottons, &c., best suited for the Sooloos are made. Their cargoes consist of a variety of articles of Chinese manufacture and produce, such as silk, satin goods, cottons, red and checked, grass-cloth clothing, handkerchiefs, cutlery, guns, ammunition, opium, lumber, china and glass-ware, rice, sugar, oil, lard, and butter. In return for this merchandise they obtain camphor, birds'-nests, rattans, biche de mar, pearls and pearl-shells, cocoa, tortoise-shell, and wax; but there is no great quantity of these articles to be obtained, perhaps not more than two or three cargoes during the season. The trade requires great knowledge of the articles purchased, for the Chinese and Sooloos are both such adepts in fraud, that great caution and circumspection are necessary.