

CHAPTER X.

SINGAPORE.

1842.

ON drawing near to Singapore, as has already been remarked, it became evident that we were approaching a great mart of Eastern commerce. If this be apparent when merely approaching that place, the impression becomes far more striking on anchoring in the roadstead, for there we found a collection of shipping, of various sizes, from the tiny cockboat to the stately and well-formed Indiaman.

The shipping are contrasted not only in size, but in rig and form, from the vast hulk-like junk to the light and skipping sampan;* and many of them were of kinds entirely new to us. Not only were a great part of the vessels of a novel description, but their national flags were equally strange. Many of the latter were now seen by us for the first time, and were displayed in various ways; some flew at each masthead, others floated from horizontal yards, while the more civilized nations were distinguished by ensigns pendent from the peak.

The variety in the style of paint and ornament was equally great. The Chinese junks exhibited their arched sides painted in curved streaks of red, yellow, and white; the Siamese ships, half European in structure and model, showed huge carved sterns; and these were contrasted with the long, low, and dark hulls of the prahus and the opium-smuggler. The two latter classes perhaps excited the greatest attention, in consequence of the war they are continually carrying on against the property and lives, as well as the morals and laws, of the natives of the surrounding countries.

* The sampan is a light and easy-pulling boat, used at Singapore to carry passengers to and from the shipping in the roads.