

MAGAZINES FOR THE MONTH.

SINGAPORE.

(From the Eclectic Review.)

Singapore originally went under the name Singha-poora, that is by interpretation, "Lion-town." It is known to the Chinese only as Sillah. It is an island which, according to government papers, measures twenty six miles in length and thirteen in breadth. It lies between the parallels $1^{\circ} 5'$ and $1^{\circ} 20' N.$, and is separated from the southernmost point of the peninsula of Malacca, by the straits of the same name—formerly the common channel of navigation for vessels between India and China—in some parts not more than half a mile wide, or so narrow indeed, that tigers are able to swim across from the main land. In the twelfth century, there stood, near the centre of the southern shore of Singapore, the capital of a Malayan state, founded by a colony of natives from the opposite peninsula; and the present settlement occupies the site of that ancient city. A passenger coming in his ship from the eastward, and entering the harbour of Singapore on a bright sunny morning, is met by a mixed variety of the most amusing and vexatious, enlivening and monotonous scenes that can, in the same amount of time, flit before one's eye during a voyage round the world. The harbour, lying south and south-eastern of the settlement—good, safe, and spacious—crowded with vessels bearing all flags, renders the place unusually gay: native canoes skimming the surface of the bay—little skiffs, very light and very fleet, worked by a couple or by four men, and still tinier boats, with fishermen casting their nets all around your ship; the whole line of shore bordered almost to the water's edge with large hotels, private residences, a battery, a church, educational institutions, a parade, and carriage drive, &c.; and the back rising grounds studded with English villas and bungalows, in the centre of which stands the Government Hill, with the Government House, Observatory, &c. But, while you are eagerly eyeing this pleasing landscape, and before your ship is able to secure her berth, your attention is arrested by a number of curious people jumping on board to inquire the object of your visit or the destination of your vessel; hosts of washermen pestering you by their petitions for your patronage, and before you are aware of it, shovelling whole packets of certificates into your hands to assure you of their honesty, punctuality, cleanliness, and so forth; human beings of all colours, and in all colours, presenting hotel cards, surgeons' cards, marine-store cards; Kling bumboat-men, India toymen, Malay pedlars,—the one vying with the other to secure your notice and favours by every kind of the most humble and respectful grimaces and postures. One afternoon's excursion on shore will serve to give you some notion of the town, suburbs, and country. Roads, good and wide, though covered, and much to your discomfort covering your best suit, with a fine red clayey dust; the grounds around the private bungalows dotted with nutmeg, gutta percha, sago, and bread fruit trees, betel-nut, palms, &c.; long open highways leading into the heart of the island, pass between large and extensive cocoa-nut plantations. The climate you must pronounce to be unexceptionably fine. Although upon the line, the hot temperature of noon is checked almost every afternoon by a sudden squall of wind, sweeping over the settlement with clouds vomiting forth their discharges of electricity and volumes of rain. Upon the west side of the island there is a small village, called New Harbour, active and bustling, the depot of the Peninsular and Oriental Company. The eastern part was at one time reputed as the resort of tigers, pirates, and outlaws. The face of the island undulates with low hills of jungle and forest trees, and many fertile valleys, for a long time scarcely known but to a few Chinese settlers. Fruits, spices, and vegetables of every variety thrive here; plantains, pineapples, guavas, nutmegs, cloves, pepper, sugar-cane, &c. In 1819, when the settlement was founded by Sir Stamford Raffles, the census gave only 150 people; in 1833, there were 20,978; in 1841, it numbered 36,000; in 1848, it had risen to 57,421; at present, it exceeds 60,000. This population is mainly composed of immigrants from India, China, and the surrounding isles. The town is distributed into three parts—the eastern and western occupied by Chinese, Klings, and Malays, and the central by Europeans. The native Malays, naturally unenterprising, jealous, and bigotedly attached to their own tribes, keep aloof from merging into other miscellaneous masses of people, and select for themselves sheltered and secluded retreats; accordingly, in a town like Singapore, they form but a minority. The majority of the population consists of Chinese, and of natives from the Madras coast and other parts of India. The Chinese may be classed into two orders—the one, of descendants from a mixed parentage, and preserving the features and dress, but not the pride and industry of their Chinese fathers; the other, of recent arrivals from the south and south-eastern coasts of China in search of their livelihood. From the very founding of the Singapore settlement, there have existed among the Chinese colonists, secret societies, originally set up in China as political clubs to subvert the Tartar dynasty; these fraternities have, in Singapore as everywhere else, been turned into combinations for the most pernicious purposes, committing alarming outrages, extensive depredations, and lawless raids, greatly to the disturbance of the public peace and the annoyance of the foreign residents. Recently, there has been a considerable accession to these irregular lodges from Chinese rebels, who, having been driven from their native land, have taken refuge in Singapore; thither they have brought with them their spirit of insubordination, and in June, 1854, a serious tumult among the Chinese settlers, in which these refugees took a prominent part, was put down, only after "above 800 Chinese had been murdered or shot." In the mixed population of the settlement we find Jews, Armenians, Parsees, Portuguese, French, and Germans: there is but a handful of Americans. The British community is large, and yearly on the increase—the majority consisting of Scotchmen. Of late, Singapore has been converted into one of the penal settlements of India, much to the annoyance of the residents. Though the island itself produces nothing in particular, the commercial business conducted upon it is most vigorous and of enormous extent. In 1852-3, the imports were valued at £3,487,695, and the exports at £3,026,986,—total, six and a half millions pounds sterling. It has already become, and gives promise of increasing, as a point of congress for natives from all the surrounding countries; it is the half-way port for the ultra-Gangetic traders, and for vessels from England, America, France, Holland, Spain, Portugal, and India, which hold commerce with China or the islands of the Archipelago; and now there is a prospect of a fine trade opening between it and Australia.—Article: "The Indian Archipelago."