

conspicuous. The approach to the town is much obstructed by reefs of coral; and the water being shallow, is impassable for an armed vessel. The island is connected with the main land or large island, by a long flat of coral, which is fordable, even at high water, and is in places quite bare at low water. One is at a loss to conceive how this place could have acquired its strength and importance. I am rather inclined to impute it to the enterprise of its first settlers, and the ascendancy given it by the accidental aid that has been afforded its chiefs by the whites, who came among them and joined their side. It was, probably, at first, the retreat of the fishermen; and from their enterprise, the difficulties they had to encounter, and the powerful connexions they have formed with the other towns and districts, it is likely that their rule will continue until the people shall have become civilized, when, from the want of internal resources, the terror of its name will pass away, and it must fall to the rank of a place of secondary importance.

At present it is in the ascendancy, and its chiefs have a high estimate of their own importance. Thus, while I was at Levuka, I was much amused by a question put me by Seru, "Why I had not gone with my ship to Ambau? why come to Levuka, where there were no gentlemen, none but common people (kai-si)? all the gentlemen lived at Ambau."

The towns of Verata and Viwa are within a short distance of Ambau, and have both been its rivals. At each of these some fearful outrage has been perpetrated upon trading vessels, for which the guilty have been but partially punished. The chief of Viwa, I understood, had made it his boast that the French had only burned a few of his mud huts, which he could shortly build again; that it would give a very few days of labour to his slaves; and that he would cut off the next vessel that came, if he had an opportunity. He thinks that it was a very cheap purchase to get so much property for so little damage. The Ambau people also spoke vauntingly of having given the French permission to destroy Viwa, as it was nothing, and satisfied the Papalangs; but they did not intend that any property or lives should be lost, for they had sent to inform the Viwa people that the attack was to be made, and even helped them to remove all their valuables. Viwa is not so large a town as Ambau, but is built on a larger island, and affords more conveniences for a port.

The whole bay of Ambau is well shielded by extensive coral sea-reefs. Here the launch and first cutter again left the Peacock, on their way to the island of Mbenga, to the westward.

Captain Hudson, after anchoring, sent Lieutenant Budd to the town