

It is difficult to estimate the average number of vessels that are to be seen in the roads of Singapore; for on some days they appear crowded, while on others they are comparatively empty. While many vessels are continually arriving and departing, the Chinese junks alone appear as fixtures; more than fifty of them were counted, with sails unbent, yards housed, and rudders unhung, in which state they resemble floating shops, wherein are offered for sale assortments of every article produced or manufactured in the Celestial Empire; samples of which, by way of sign, are to be seen hanging about them in all directions. These junks make no more than one voyage a year, performing their passage in either direction during the favouring monsoon.

Unlike other ports, the water presents at first so many objects to attract the attention, that the land and town remain unnoticed until the curiosity in relation to those which are afloat is satisfied. On turning to view the town, its situation appears to be low, as well as that of the island on which it is built. The highest point of the latter is not more than five hundred feet above the level of the sea, and even this elevation is distant, so that there is nothing to render the scenery picturesque, nor has it much of the character that is styled Oriental. The distant jungle, however, relieved by the white portions of buildings in the European style, furnishes a landscape pleasing to the eye. These buildings seem to be upon the very beach, while a hill in the rear is crowned by the dwelling of the governor, near which is the flag-staff. The intervening space is filled with buildings, whose style holds an intermediate place between that of Europe, and that of the Chinese and Malays, neither of which predominates so much as to give its distinctive character to the scene.

The stranger, after anchoring in the roads, is not long before he discovers the point at which the river discharges itself; for one continued stream of boats, sampans, and prahus, is seen tending to a point in the beach, where the entrance is partly concealed from view; neither can he be long ignorant how large a concourse of various races is here assembled. Our ship was crowded from an early hour, with tailors, shoemakers, washerwomen, and venders of curiosities. The latter brought shells, birds of paradise, monkeys, parrots, corals, and mats. Without-board there were innumerable bumboats, bringing for sale fresh bread, eggs, milk, chickens and ducks, both alive and cooked, fish, fruit, and vegetables. All sued piteously for permission to come alongside, and made a prodigious clatter. The features, dress, and language of the venders were as various as the articles they had to sell; and they agreed only in the common character of a dark skin.