

silky black mustache. He dresses in clothes which might pass well for those of a bicyclist. In the place of pantaloons he wears a wide strip of black silk, or surong, which Siamese gentlemen wrap around their waists and pull between their legs, so that it forms a pair of loose knee breeches. He wears long silk stockings and low shoes, while the upper part of his body is clad in a military coat. His majesty sometimes wears a helmet. At other times he sports a derby hat, and it is only upon state occasions at his home that he puts on one of his enormous crowns. He has several such crowns in his palace. These crowns are pyramids of jewels set in gold, rising in circular tiers, and ending in a long point, like that of a pencil, 18 or 20 inches above the head of the wearer.

The king is practically the owner of Siam. He has one of the richest countries of Asia. It is bigger than Germany and richer than Egypt. There is no land anywhere which will produce more valuable rice. Its mighty forests are full of teak wood, and its mines contain gold, silver and precious stones. The king has hundreds of elephants, some of which are worth \$1,000 apiece, and his income is said to amount to more than \$10,000,000 a year. I was told in Bangkok that he had between \$30,000,000 and \$40,000,000 stored up for a rainy day and that he could increase his revenues at will. It is the king who decides what the taxes are to be. He taxes what he pleases and whom he pleases. He gets his money from all sorts of sources, from gambling to farming, and the taxes upon some classes of people are so heavy that Siamese men have often to sell their wives and children as debt slaves to enable them to foot the bills. I saw men in chains working on the road under the shadow of the palace wall, and I was told that the king's laws were such that all of his subjects have to work a part of each year, without pay, for him. He has, you know, about 10,000,000 of people in his kingdom. The king's power is absolute. By a word he can deprive a man of his property, throw him into chains or put him to death. He owns not only the men, but the women as well, and he has the right to take into his harem any maiden that attracts his fancy.

The king has acres of palaces. In the center of the big city of Bangkok there is a little city surrounded by a big wall which contains the quarters of his majesty and those of his servants and his harem. The latter is shown to no man, but I was able to go through some of the finest buildings of the palace proper. Passing the soldiers at the gate I walked for perhaps a quarter of a mile by one building after another until I came to an immense structure which in the distance looked like marble. As I drew closer I saw that the marble was stucco and that the building was made of brick or stone covered with plaster. It was, however, very imposing. It covered a vast area of ground and rose to the height of three tall stories before the high ridged roof began. It had many steeples and towers, and the wide stairways which led to the front door were guarded by immense elephants of some metal plated with gold. Passing by the golden elephants, I went up the steps and entered the king's council chamber. He has here a throne which looks for all the world like a bed, and upon it I

was told that his majesty, as a rule, sat with his legs crossed like a Turk while he received his cabinet ministers and discussed matters relating to his kingdom. I learned that the chief work of the palace was done at night under the rays of the electric light, and that the king and the cabinet ministers did a large part of sleeping in the day time. On the opposite side of the hall I saw another large room.

This was the king's reception room for foreigners. It is gorgeously furnished and contains rare vases from Dresden, beautiful carvings from Japan and China, and some wonderful gold work from the jewelers of Siam. There were elephants' tusks, beautifully polished, standing here and there in the corners, and oil paintings looked down from the walls. The next room into which I was taken was the most wonderful I had ever seen. It was the throne room, where upon great state occasions the king receives ministers of state. The room covers a vast extent, its ceiling being at least fifty feet from the floor. It is longer than the east room at the White House and as wide as a theater. At the back there is a rostrum, upon which the king sits at such times on a golden chair, under royal umbrellas upheld by servants. Around the room running along the walls and extending some distance out from the ends there is a very thicket of golden trees and bushes. These little trees have their trunks and branches plated with gold. The leaves are of solid gold, as are also the smaller twigs. They are made by the cunning gold workers of the different provinces, and are sent by the governor and subordinate officials in different parts of the kingdom as presents to his majesty. On one side of the room I saw a number of silver trees among the gold ones, and it seemed to me that the amount of metal required to make them must have been worth a fortune.

It is according to law for the king to take one of his half sisters as a wife and to make her his queen. This keeps the royal family comparatively pure, as only her sons can ascend to the throne. The present queen is, I am told, about fifteen years younger than the king. She is said to be a very progressive woman, and to help him considerably in the management of his government. She directs his household establishment and rules the harem. Her majesty is a fair type of the best-looking Siamese maiden. She has a light brown complexion, oily black hair, which is cut short, and which consists of black bristles, like those of a shoe brush, standing out all over her head. Her majesty smokes cigarettes, as do all the ladies of her harem, and she is very fond of chewing the betel nut. Betel nut chewing is common among all classes in Siam. This nut is the green nut of the Areca palm. In some respects it makes you think of a green walnut. It is cut into little pieces and mixed with tobacco and pink-colored lime, the mixture forming the cud which Siamese ladies chew with more gusto than any of our American girls chew wax.

Betel chewing is far more disgusting than wax chewing. As the fair betel chewers masticate their toothsome cud its juice colors the saliva red, and their mouths seem to be filled with blood. Their teeth become as black as jet and their lips are turned dark brown. Black

teeth in Siam are a sign of beauty. The people have a saying that any dog can have white teeth, but it is only those who are rich enough to afford the betel nut who can have beautiful black ones. Not only the queen, but also all the ladies of the harem chew. I visited a large store right near the palace, which furnishes the ladies much of their finery, their sweetmeats and their articles of toilet. Among other things which are sold are betel spittoons. These are little cups about the size of a shaving mug. Every one of the king's wives has one or two, and each lady keeps one always by her side, lifting it to her lips from time to time and squirting out into it her surplus saliva. Every lady of the harem has also her betel box. This is for the materials of chewing. Some of the boxes are of silver, and those of the king and queen are set with jewels. During my stay in the king's store I asked some questions as to the fashions affected by the queen and the other ladies of the harem. I was told that the favorite costume of the king's wives is the surong or waist cloth, falling to the knees, and a jacket of silk. I saw many of the jackets in this store. They were loosely made, and were decorated with ribbons and Swiss embroidery. The man told me that most of the women preferred to go barefooted, and that most of them wore anklets of gold. The king keeps between one and two hundred ladies in his harem. They are selected from the best families of the country, and I was told that the nobles of the court were anxious to have their daughters taken up by the king, as through them they were able to secure fat jobs and official favor. The rules governing the king's household establishment are very rigid. No woman can go outside of the palace without his permission, and her days of royal favor are usually short. After the age of twenty-five, if a woman has not had children, she becomes one of the waiting maids of the younger wives, new girls being brought in every year. The last king had an even larger harem than the present one. His wives came from China and India, as well as Siam, and he was anxious, it is said, to add some well-bred English girls to his gallery of beauties.

With so many wives, you would think the king would be able to do little outside his own family. He does a great deal. He has a cabinet of twelve members and many subordinate officials, although he settles the most important matters himself. Not a dollar can go out of his treasury without his signature. While I was in Bangkok a young American, who had been teaching the king's children wanted his salary. The treasury officials knew that it was due, but it could not be paid until his majesty came back from his trip into the interior. Chulalongkorn is the most progressive monarch Siam has ever had. He has taken up with foreign ways and has to a certain extent modernized Siam. The country is a member of the International Postal Union. I saw the postmen delivering letters, and I was able to register mail which I sent to America. There is now an electric railroad in Bangkok, and within the past few years several steam railroads have been constructed. A number of new roads have been surveyed, and there is one being built from Bangkok to Korat, about 165 miles into the interior. Connection will eventually be made with Burmah, and at no distant