

gressive spirit of Chululankorn. He is one of the brightest of the Asiatic rulers and he has done much to advance civilization in Siam. He has put telegraph lines through a great part of his kingdom. There is now a street car line in Bangkok and the city has electric lights. It used to be that the money used in Siam was cowrie shells, or silver and gold buttons. This king has adopted a coinage making money much the same as that of ours. He has a mint of his own and he imports Mexican dollars and casts these into coins for the use of his people. The unit of value in Siam is the tical, and the chief silver coin used is about the size of a half dollar. He has a post office department, and Siam belongs to the International Postal Union. While I was in Bangkok I met the head of his royal college, and I saw a wonderful museum in the grounds of the palace. The king talks English, and he is thinking of building a railroad which will open up the interior of his rich kingdom. Siam is full of valuable resources. It has mighty forests of teakwood and its mines contain the finest of gold and silver. The king has an income of \$10,000,000 a year and he is said to have about \$50,000,000 stored away in his coffers. He has his own secretary of the treasury, but he signs all his own checks himself, and he is said to be a very fine business man. He has his cabinet just as our President has and he has his war department, state department, interior department and agricultural department. His country is divided up into forty-one provinces, presided over by governors, and he runs things to suit himself, making such appointments as he chooses.

SOME QUEER TAXES.

The people of Siam are taxed for all they are worth. Everything under the sun has to pay a percentage to the government, and a great part of the revenue of the king comes from the gambling establishments. The people are a nation of gamblers and the gambling taxes bring in half a million dollars a year. The taxes are all farmed out, as are also the people, who, as slaves of the king, are ordered to work for him a part of the year. It is only the Chinese who are not subject to such service, and they are released from it by the payment of a poll tax. There are many Chinese in Siam, and it is said they are fast swallowing up the country. They are smarter than the Siamese in a business way and they marry Siamese wives and settle down there for life. All the governors of Siam make presents to the king, and they sometimes pay their taxes in the shape of gold and silver brushes. In the audience chamber of the palace I saw around the room trees and brushes of gold. The leaves of these trees were of pure gold, while the trunks are heavily plated with gold. On one side of the room there were a number of silver trees, and I was told that these were a part of the year's offerings to his majesty from his governors.

SIAM'S DANGERS.

I heard a diplomat who is well posted in Asiatic matters discuss last night the reason why the king sent his legation to Washington. Said he: "The King of Siam is very anxious to strengthen his relations with foreign powers. He realizes the danger which constantly menaces his country from its geographical position. It is the meat of the sandwich of farther India. One slice of this sandwich belongs to France and includes Cochin China. The other slice belongs to Great Britain and it takes up the provinces of Burmah. Siam lies in the center and it is richer than either. Both France and England are land hungry and they look with greedy eyes on Siam. It is one of the richest plums which still hang on the tree of barbarism in the far east. It produces crop after crop without the aid of manure and it ships millions of dollars' worth of rice, pepper and cattle every year."

THE SIAMESE ARMY.

"What kind of an army has Siam?" I asked. "There was no navy there when I visited the country."

"The army is nothing to speak of," was the reply. Every man has to serve the state for three months in the year, but there is no armed militia. In case of a war with England or France Siam could not do much, and its chief safety lies in the fact that neither of these great countries want the other to have it. I suppose it eventually will be divided between them, and if it should, it would be much better for the people. As it is they are practically slaves, while under France or England they would be free. I have no doubt but that the king appreciates the situation and he probably thinks that if he has legations at the other capitals these two nations will be less inclined to impose upon him."

HOW THE KING LOOKS.

The King of Siam is still a young man. He will be forty years old on the 21st of September. He is not over five feet high, but he is very straight and well formed. In his court dress he wears a vast fortune of jewels. His head is crowned with a golden pyramid of jewels. He puts on upon state occasions a coat, vest and brocaded surong, which are just loaded down with jewels, and I was told that he often wore upon state occasions precious stones which were worth a million dollars. The Siamese do not wear pantaloons, and the surong, which they tie about the waist and tuck it in at the back, takes their place. The king wears silk stockings, shoes which are pointed like those of the Turk, and his costume is a beautiful one. He is not a bad looking man, his face is olive brown, his eyes are black, his forehead is high and his eyes are slightly almond in shape. He has a little mustache and the thickest of stiff, black hair. He is very fond of his wife, I mean his half-sister wife, and he makes a great deal of the crown prince. The crown prince is still a boy, but he has been shown a number of times to people and he is said to have remarkably good sense. Just outside of Bangkok there is a palace which belongs to him, and the boy is being educated in such a way that he will probably make a fit successor of his father.

SIAMESE WOMEN.

I wonder whether the members of the legislation will ever bring their wives to Washington? If they do we will have a decided sensation, provided they come in their native costume. The common Siamese women wears only a surong and a Turkish towel. The surong goes around her waist and between her legs, and the Turkish towel is wound about her bust and shoulders. Now and then she takes off the towel and is satisfied

with the surong. She rarely wears shoes, and a girl under eight years old often wears nothing but a string around her waist. The better classes wear more costly clothing, and some of the ladies have a strip of thin cotton which they wear tightly around the body under the arm pits and fasten with a knot just over the bust, leaving the shoulders and neck entirely bare. Some of the ladies of the harem wear upon state occasions European clothing, and others add to the surong a loose jacket trimmed with Swiss embroidery and covered with bows of ribbons set on in rows. They all wear bracelets on their wrists and anklets on their legs, and not a few of them are quite pretty. The Siamese girls are the most graceful women in the world. Their joints are very supple, and a part of their education is made up of bending their joints back and forth to make them so. They are all short haired, and when young they are as plump as partridges and as straight as the palm trees of their own beautiful land. As they grow older they become wrinkled and ugly, and the most of them ruin their teeth from chewing the betel. Only the fewest of them are educated, and I don't think that they would be happy in our high French-heel shoes and they would die if bound in by our corsets and crinoline. One of the prettiest women in Siam is the queen. She has short hair, like her Siamese sisters, and her teeth would be pretty if she were not addicted to betel nut chewing. She is of nearly the same age as the king, and it is said that her marriage was to a certain extent a marriage of love. It seems strange to think that a man should fall in love with his sister, but you must remember that the King of Siam came of a family of eighty-four children and he had thirty-four half brothers and forty-nine half sisters. The custom of Siam requires that the royal blood shall be kept pure, and for years the kings have, I am told, married their sisters. It is considered an honor among the noble families of Siam to have a daughter in the harem of the king, and the only woman that the king cannot marry by the laws of Siam is his mother. His court is one of intrigue and plotting, and a government officer who has a daughter in the harem can thus better hold the friendship of the king and can keep himself posted on all that is going on in the palace. The last king had wives from China and India, and he wanted to add an English girl to his gallery of beauties. The women of the harem live to a certain extent together in the palace, and they are considered passe at the age of twenty-five. At this time, if they have no children, they become the waiting maids of the younger wives of the king, and the stock is replenished yearly with the flower of the beauties of Siam.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

THAT STANBACH silver advocate the *Denver News* makes the point that "When silver was demonetized in 1873 a bale of cotton brought \$138 in gold. Now it requires three bales of cotton to purchase the same amount of gold. And yet people wonder why the South favors free coinage of silver." Our own farmers and other grain-growers should also make a note of it that it used to take a full-orbed dollar to buy a bushel of their wheat; now a "65-cent-dollar" buys from one and a half to two bushels.