

## FRANCE BEGAN IT.

### What Caused the Trouble With Siam.

The Ruler of Siam an Interesting and Fin-de-Siècle Young Autocrat.

HARTFORD, Conn., July 24.—Hon. Isaac Townsend Smith, consul-general for Siam in the United States, has been the guest since Saturday of Hon. Wm. Lee, of this city. To a reporter to-day he spoke as follows on the Siam complications:

The French government has been desirous for some time to increase its possessions in the east. It attempted such a project at Tonquin, China, but met with reverses. France obtained a foothold at Cambodia, on the Gulf of Siam, a few years ago. Since that time the French have shown a desire to make use of this opportunity to enlarge their possession and control of the country.

They dispatched a steamer up the Mekong river, which is purely Siamese, and built forts, stirring up strife with the Siamese. Some of the Annam troops were killed, and the French made use of that fact to enforce their demands on the Siamese to consent to an extension of the French boundaries.

The French authorities hold that the boundary of that government reaches the Mekong river. The King of Siam immediately communicated with the French minister, stating that the Siamese government had no intention of making war. It was held by the King that the strife was provoked by the French troops. The King, however, informed the French that the government would make reparation for the damages that had been sustained.

The French disregarded this proposition, and sent a man-of-war up the Menam river, on which the capital, Bangkok, is situated, and reasserted the demand for indemnity at the cannon's mouth. The original sum demanded was 3,000,000. This was subsequently reduced to 2,500,000.

It was also demanded that certain boundary lines which have never been defined should be conceded by Siam. A year ago the boundary dispute between the English in Burma and Siam was settled, the Siamese government making liberal concessions. Unquestioned assurance was given on the part of England that the English authorities would stand by Siam in settling the boundary dispute with the French.

Consul-General Smith said that the Siamese government is unable to cope with France single handed, or for that matter with any of the great European powers. The navy is small, but well disciplined, and is under a Danish commander. The army consists of about 12,000 troops; who are also officered by Danish officers. From 4,000 to 5,000 troops are stationed at Bangkok.

It is the opinion of Consul-General Smith that the king of Siam will be compelled to make concessions demanded by the French. It is evident that Great Britain will not attempt to carry out the agreement made a year ago to aid the Siamese in settling the French dispute. In this situation the King will make the settlement under protest.

"The Siamese are a brave people," said the consul-general, and would make a gallant defence of their country, but they would be overwhelmed by the French equipment.

#### Affairs in Siam.

BANGKOK, July 24. The irritation of the British colony is intense at the seeming apathy of the home government.

The territorial demands of France are regarded here as very vague. The Siamese, although intensely excited, are displaying great self-control.

The "Inconstante," which, of all the French gunboats in Siamese waters, has the greatest draught, will be able to cross the bar easily before July 27, when the monsoon will increase the depth of her water.

The French gunboats are fixing chain armor amidships. The Siamese vessels also are preparing for action. All have steam up. Their Siamese ships are crowded with men. Their intention is, in case the French commence hostilities, to steam down and ram the French gunboats, attempt to board them in force and attack the crews with fixed bayonets.

The French legation professes to believe that the gunboats cannot cross the bar until high tide on Wednesday, which would leave time to complete an amicable settlement.

The territory that Siam offers to sacrifice fully covers the extreme of recently attempted aggression. The cession involves the evacuation of the Siamese posts of Poowadone Altopen and Sumpang. On the river itself the French have been unable in four months to place a single station excepting Khong, and that was obtained by a surprise. The completed land advance was the cause of the naval attack now made through Bangkok.

Russia recently sounded Siam as to whether the latter was disposed to concede the Island of Salang or Junkceylon, on the eighth degree of north latitude and west of the Malay peninsula, for a Russian naval station. The naval authorities consider Salang as of great strategic importance.

#### PARIS, July 25

A cabinet council was held to-day at Marley Le Roy. President Carnot presided over the deliberations, which were entirely devoted to the Siamese question. After the council arose a semi-official statement of the proceedings was issued. This statement was that in conformity with the unanimous vote of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies the government had taken such measures to safeguard the interests and dignity of France as it considered necessary from the Siamese reply to the French ultimatum.

#### TIEN TSIN, July 25.

The Chinese government has received the news of France's territorial demands upon Siam with amazement and indignation. That France should lay claim to the country up to the twenty-third parallel is regarded as an intrusion upon the rights of the Chinese.

#### Siam and Its King.

The King of Siam is a monarch who has more absolute power over his subjects than the Czar. Few men in this world have a much to make them feel big and important, but for one in his position he is a very much civilized and fin-de-siècle young person. He is small in person. His head is crowned with a golden pyramid of jewels, rising in circular tier, diminishing as they go upward, until they end in a long pencil-like point, which extends nearly two feet above the forehead of his kingly owner.

He is a pleasant-looking fellow, and his olive-brown face is plump and unwrinkled. He has beautiful liquid black eyes, a broad high and rather full forehead, and short, straight, black hair. Under his rather short and half-flat nose there is a silky black moustache, and below this the lips are rather thick and the chin plump and well rounded. His hands and feet are well made, and he is, all told, a good specimen of Siamese beauty.

He is the ninth son of Maha Mongkut, the last King of Siam, and he was picked out of a family of 84 children to be placed upon the throne. He has 34 half brothers and 49 half sisters.

Looking at him it is hard to imagine that he is the sacred ruler of from 6,000,000 to 10,000,000 of people and it is hard for an American to appreciate his absolute power and his holy dignity. The people of the country are his slaves. He has the right to call them into his service, either with or without pay, and all men in Siam are forced to give him either the whole or a part of their services during the year. His word can throw a man into chains or put him to death; can deprive him of his property or rob him of his daughter.

He taxes the people as he pleases, and these taxes are so heavy that at times some men have to sell their wives and children as slaves to enable them to pay him. Still, his vaults are full of treasure. Siam has no national debt, and he has an income of more than \$10,000,000 a year.

Still, this King of Siam is the most progressive the country has ever had. He is far in advance of his people, and he is doing a great deal to civilize them. Before his second coronation in 1873 all natives who approached the King had to do so on all fours. They had to raise their hands in adoration to him and bump their heads on the mats before him.

The King did away with all that, and he has introduced the American handshake into his reception of foreigners. He gives receptions to foreigners, and he speaks the English tongue, though he never does this when noted foreigners have an audience with him. He has brought the telegraph and the telephone into Bangkok, has established a street car line and lights his harem with electric lights.

The King of Siam is a Buddhist, and he was for some time a Buddhist priest, as is the custom with all men in Siam. Everyone is expected at some time to enter the priesthood, and this royal monarch, with his millions of treasure, his scores of wives and his \$10,000,000 a year, once shaved his head, and nominally gave up his crown and his harem to wear a yellow cotton scarf about his waist and to go fasting and praying.

The great event in the life of a Siamese is the function of having his hair cut. On the top of a Siamese baby's head a certain lock of hair is preserved. All the rest of the head is shaved, but this lock is kept sacred until he reaches the age when he officially passes from boyhood to manhood. Then off comes the lock. The celebrations attending the hair cutting of the present King lasted three days.

The King of Siam has a very large assortment of wives, but he is so high and mighty that he must marry nobody beneath him in rank, his only equals being his own family. His regular official queen must therefore, always be his half sister. The Queen is not far from 20 years of age; she rules the harem, and she is a very pretty Siamese girl.

She smokes cigarettes, as does also the King and she chews the betel nut, making her teeth as black as jet and her lips stick out. The Siamese say that any dog can have white teeth, but that it is only those who are rich enough to afford the betel nut who can have black ones.

The debtor class of Siam afford a great contrast to all this gorgeousness. They are stripped naked, and chained to heavy logs, are compelled to work as slaves. The interest on money is so high in Siam that when a man once gets in debt the most he can possibly hope for by the hardest kind of work is to pay the interest on what he owes. This has discouraged industry and has encouraged the practice of allowing the women to do the work. Man, being proud and ambitious, soon tires of industry indulged in for its own sake.

The temples and palaces of Siam are structures of complicated magnificence.

The sacred white elephant for which Siam is famous, if he ever did amount to anything, has gone all to pieces. He is at present a mangy, scraggy, wild-eyed creature, with nothing white about him but his ears, which seem to have leprosy. His keepers are dirty, he is not bound with golden chains, and the only thing royal about him is his bad temper.

You know old Jones, who owes us for three years' subscription? Yes, Well, he's having a devil of a time of it. Indeed! When did he die?

#### OH, WHAT A LIE!

The Fish Editor Relates an Experience With a Sea Serpent.

According to the New York Press, its editors were regaling each other with stories of personal experiences, during a slack hour the other day, and when it came to the fish editor's turn he reeled off the following whopper:

"I walked out one afternoon among the sand dunes of Cape Cod, when suddenly I heard a great sigh come from seaward and looking in that direction I saw the head of a marine monster approaching. This head stood at least 10 feet above the water and belonged to a creature, half fish and half serpent. It came toward shore with increased rapidity and I hid behind a banana tree."

"Banana trees do not grow on Cape Cod said the agricultural editor."

You have probably never visited the part of the cape to which I refer," said the fish editor and continued: "The creature crawled out on the sand. It had 16 fins and four feet. Its body was red, white and blue and behind each ear grew a large beer keg. Its most curious feature was its tail, which was shaped like the flukes of an angur, and was joined to its body by three links of iron chain. There was an indescribably sad expression in its eyes, and as the poor thing turned and gazed off to sea pathetically. I could not but weep from sympathy. When it turned its head again it too, was crying like a babe. But it was evidently determined to do something desperate and I soon saw that it contemplated suicide. Going to the top of the highest dune in sight it rose up on the end of its tail, and with a peculiar undulating motion started itself a whirling."

The flukes of the tail began instantly to sink into the sand. As he whirled faster the angur on his tail bored deeper. I saw then that he intended to bury himself alive. He whirled faster and faster and deeper and deeper. His body curved out in a great bow as he whirled, and the tears from his eyes, thrown off by the centrifugal force of his motion, struck the sand like cannon shots, throwing clouds of it into the air at every plunk. I was gazing at him fascinated, when an unearthly shriek from the sea made me turn around. Coming in like lightning was another, but small, creature built on much the same plan. I guessed rightly that the newcomer was the first one's sweetheart. She yelled like a calliope, and soon shrieked, 'Oh, Gus, don't! I never did love that whale. It was only a bluff. You are and have been the center of all my young affections.' But Gus either did not hear or didn't care. He kept on boring and was more than half buried. You can guess how rapidly he turned when I tell you that at the top of the hole the friction of his body had melted the sand into a glass ring. Well, the little one kept screaming and wringing her fins, and the big one kept whirling deeper into the sand. By and by he was all covered but his head. Then that, too, went under, and, determined to complete the job, he reached out his long, red tongue, and pulled the hole in after him. Then the little one went away with a face as downcast as mine was after the late election. It was one of the most terrible love tragedies that ever a newspaper man witnessed.

#### HERE'S A QUEER STORY.

A Woman Said to be a Victim of Diabolical Possession.

MONTREAL, July 25.—L'Union des Cantons de l'Est tell a curious story of a girl said to be possessed of the devil. The girl is named Angeline Pageot, and resides with her parents near Thetford, in the county of Magantic. She is both young and beautiful. One day about the middle of June, while engaged at needlework, she screamed, jumped up and ran into the woods near by. She returned in about a quarter of an hour and told her parents that she was possessed of the devil. Nothing more occurred for three days. But on Sunday morning when they spoke to her of going to church there was a terrible scene. Streams of fire poured from her eyes and her mouth and she uttered blasphemies to make the hair of those who heard her stand on end. She threatened her father, and overwhelmed him with curses and with a terrifying gesture showed him the door, exclaiming with a strange voice, 'Go and see him if you want your master. As for me I remain here and I will sing the praises of my own.' There are days when she is perfectly quiet, but from the moment that one speaks of religion she becomes furious beside herself, and is pacified with difficulty. Sometimes toward evening, when the moon makes its appearance, she sings a romance. What a voice! What singing! One would believe it to be an angel. And what is the strangest thing is that the young girl never sung before this event. The physician consulted says that there are symptoms of madness, but there is something supernatural. The religious authorities have been warned of the case.

#### Stones That Bend.

Of most stones rigidity is one of the most marked characteristics, and it is hard for uninformed people to believe that there are any stones that can be bent. There are some, however, that are more flexible than wood and bent readily under light pressure without breaking. The most abundant of these is itacolomite, or flexible sandstone, which is found in large deposits in Brazil. The minerals being quite flexible in themselves confer the same property upon the sandstone as a whole. The way in which the cementing material was introduced into the itacolomite is not easy of explanation. Mica and sericite are not soluble in water, like silica. It is most probable that they were originally introduced in the form of clay or some similar material and afterward metamorphosed by heat pressure and superheated steam into micaceous mineral. Instances of a similar change of one mineral species into another are very common.

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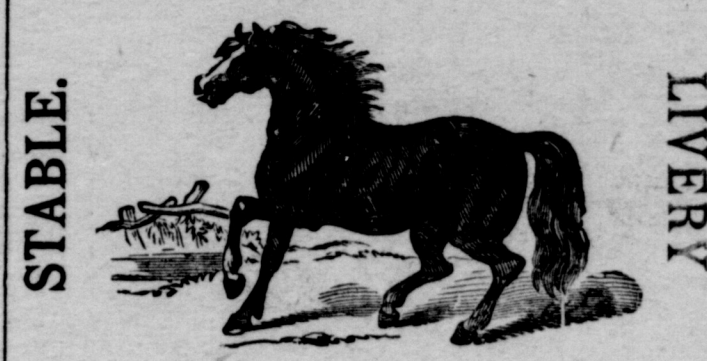
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