

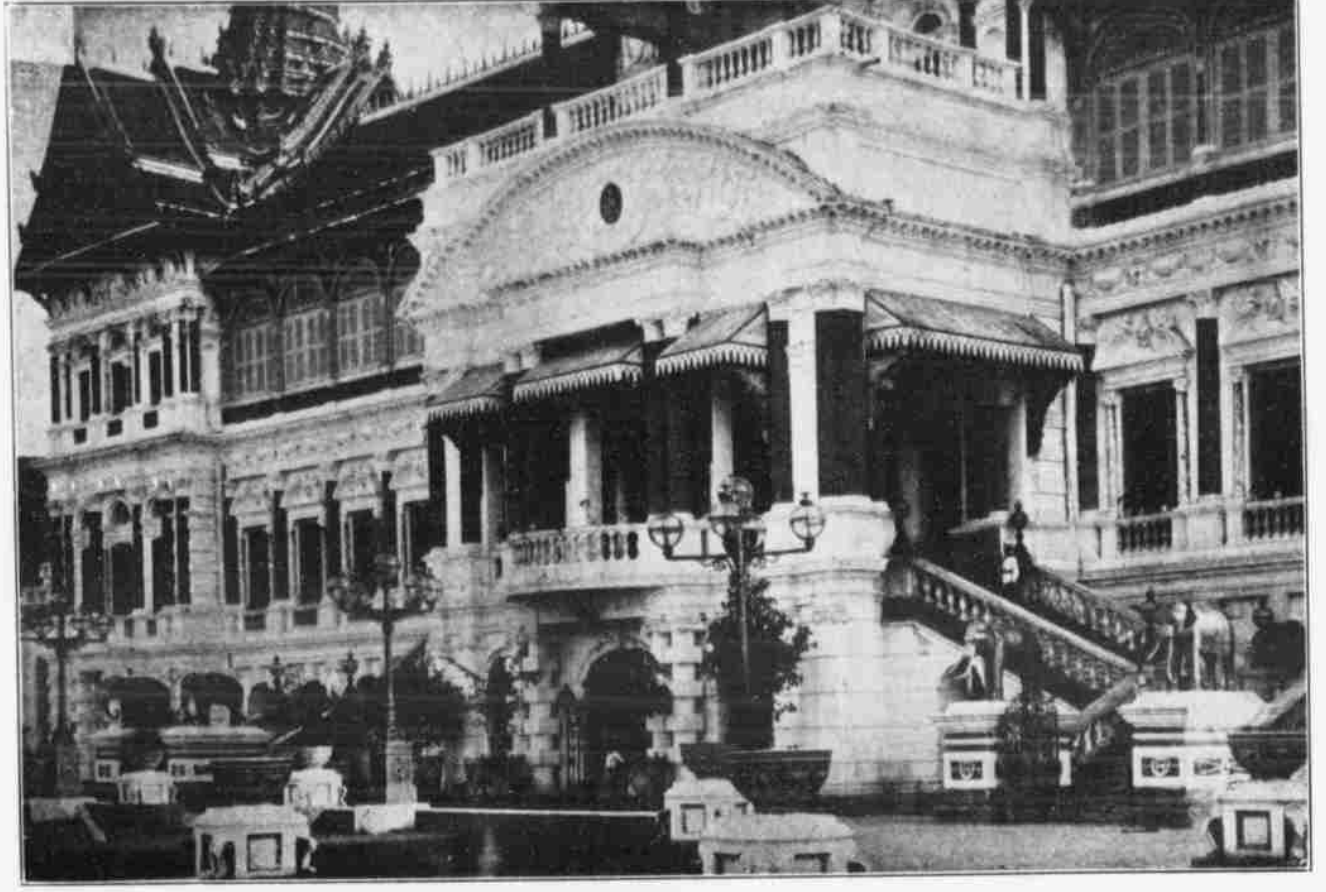
Siam and America's Growing Interests There



CHULALANGKORN, KING OF SIAM.



GIRL FROM UPPER INDIA.



FRONT VIEW OF THE ROYAL PALACE AT BANGKOK, SIAM.

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WASHINGTON, May 15.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—For the first time in our history Siam has a legation at Washington accredited solely to the United States. Prior to this there has been one minister for the United States and England, who has spent most of his time in London and visited Washington only periodically to pay his respects to the president and attend to Siamese interests on this side of the ocean. Of late, however, the king has been pushing his trade in every possible way, and has now established an envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary at Washington. The new minister has the title of Phya Akharaj Yaradhara, and he has held the highest official positions at home. He has been associated with the imperial cabinet and has made a reputation for himself as a diplomat and statesman. The minister is a native Siamese. He belongs to the nobility and is a man of education and accomplishment. He does not speak English fluently, and my interview concerning the country was, at his request, carried on through the secretary of the legation, Mr. Edward H. Loftus.

Our conversation opened with some kind expressions as to the friendly feeling which the king and his people have for Americans. Said Mr. Loftus: "His majesty, the king, is anxious to further the trade of his country with yours. He has the friendliest of feelings toward Americans and wishes even closer relations than those which now exist between the two people. The legation will do all it can to better the trade between the two countries and I really think we have a market there which your people do not appreciate. Siam is one of the richest countries of the far east. It is bigger than France or Germany and it has a population of about 7,000,000. It is a country of many large cities and one with which the English and the Germans have a large trade. It is one which is equally open to the Americans, who we hope will, from now on, rapidly increase their exports."

American Houses in Bangkok.

"But have we not already a big business with your country?" I asked. "Nothing like so great as it should be," replied Mr. Loftus. "You send us some machinery and hardware and a large number of bicycles. We buy some of your writing and printing paper and a little stationery and some breadstuffs, tobacco and coal oil. The trade in 1900 was more than two and one-half times as great as it was in 1899, but you have not begun to touch its possibilities. You should sell all sorts of machinery and almost every kind of American notions. Siam is an agricultural country. It has also enormous areas of forests, of teak and other hardwoods, and American saws and axes should be in demand. Russia surpasses you in its shipment of coal oil, and as to all kinds of cotton goods England has the lead. Indeed, about 90 per cent of the foreign trade of Siam is with England, although the Germans are trying hard to introduce their manufactures. "Both Germans and English have business houses in Bangkok and other Siamese cities and the Americans should establish similar institutions. Your manufacturers should send out their agents and do business with the country direct instead of selling through Hong Kong and Singapore as you now do." "Along what lines could Americans make money in Siam, Mr. Loftus?" said I. "There are many openings for capital allied to good business brains," was the reply. "The trade in teakwood is largely done by foreign syndicates. There is one English company far in the interior which has a capital of \$10,000,000. It ships its

timber to all parts of the world. There is no wood so good as teak for certain kinds of shipbuilding, for railroad ties and other things. The wood does not rot when in the water, and at the same time it is easy to handle. We have some of the largest teak forests of the world and our shipments of teak amount to thousands of tons annually. The teak is sold by weight and it brings about \$50 per ton. We have a forest department administered by British officials and so far about half the forest areas are being held in reserve."

Money in Teakwood.

"Tell me more about the teakwood forests, Mr. Loftus. Is not the same kind of timber found in the Philippines?" "I doubt it," was the reply. "I believe that the chief teak forests are restricted to Siam, Burmah and Cochin China. I know they are planting out trees in Java, but such as grow wild there are not of the superior quality of our teak. It takes about sixty years to grow a tree so that it is large enough for lumber, and whether the trees could be grown in the Philippines or not I cannot tell. It is not right to speak of a teak forest. There are no woods which are all teak, but the trees are found scattered through the other woods. They are gotten out by means of elephants and the work is very expensive, and very hard. The elephants are costly. They have to be trained to the work, and they can work only a certain number of hours of the day, and only so many days in the year."

"In what part of the country are the best forests?" I asked. "They are in the upper provinces. The wood is cut and brought to the river and floated down to Bangkok, from where it is shipped to all parts of the world. The government has certain taxes that have to be paid for felling and shipping, and altogether the expenses are great. For this reason a large capital is required. Nevertheless the business pays very well and fortunes have been made in it."

Siam's New Railroads.

"How about your new railroads?" I asked. "They have opened up many parts which until now have been comparatively inaccessible," said Mr. Loftus. "The railroad from Bangkok to Korat has been completed and it is doing a good business. This road began its construction in 1892, when his majesty, the king, dug the first spadeful of earth. He used a spade made of silver and ivory and put the earth into a wheelbarrow of ebony and silver. The spade was of a New England pattern and the wheelbarrow was of American design. At the same time the crown prince took the wheelbarrow and wheeled it about twenty-five yards along the line of the road and dumped out the earth. This was to show that the king and the court were thoroughly interested in the undertaking."

"Tell me something about Korat, the terminus of the road," said I. "Korat is a big city surrounded by rich plains. It is a great center of trade. It lies 165 miles from Bangkok and in the past about two weeks have been required for the trip between the two places. By the railroad it is made in ten hours. They are now extending the railroad on to the north and it will eventually connect with Chiengmai, the great center of trade of northern Siam. From there a line will eventually connect it with the Burmese railroads now being built toward China. I doubt not that in time the Chinese and Transiberian systems will be connected, so that one may really go from Paris to Bangkok by rail. "Another railroad is to be built from Bangkok westward down through the Malay peninsula to the Straits of Malacca. We

have a road from Bangkok to Paknam, on the Menam river, and altogether we are gradually becoming a railroad country." "Where does Siam get its railroad materials?" "So far most of them have come from England," was the reply. "There is no reason why the United States should not supply its share. Our country is such that we need many bridges and you Americans are now doing much in furnishing bridges for the world. I see no reason why you should not compete as to our locomotives



MINISTER FROM SIAM TO UNITED STATES.

and other rolling stock and in even taking contracts for the construction of the roads."

Bangkok and Its Electric Cars.

"Do you use much electricity in Siam?" "We have twenty-eight electric plants in Bangkok alone. We have one incandescent electric light plant which furnishes 17,000 lights. It originally belonged to the English Brush company and is used for lighting the king's palace and for the use of the public. It was one time operated by an American engineer named Bennett, and an American syndicate, but was later on sold to a Danish company, which now manages it. The most of its supplies were purchased from Europe, but some from America."

"The Danish company now owns the electric railroads. It has a tramway seven and one-half miles long in operation and a track of three and a half miles more is under construction. It advertises that it will supply electric power throughout the city and it expects to run a line of automobiles in connection with its street cars. In addition to this there are private plants the equipment of which is largely American. You can now reach almost any part of the city or suburbs by street cars."

"Give me some idea of Bangkok, Mr. Loftus. Our people think the town is made up of houses floating on the water." "That is so only to a limited extent," was the reply. "The city lies on the Menam river, extending for miles up and down both sides of it. There is a large boat population and perhaps 20,000 people who actually live in houses anchored to posts in the river so that they rise and fall with the tide. Many of these houses are of large size. They are built upon rafts and are very comfortable homes. They constitute, however, but a small part of Bangkok. The city has 1,000,000 people. It has many magnificent homes and fine public buildings. The palaces of the king are of great extent and in many respects are as fine as the great buildings of Europe. "The city is a beautiful one. It is cut up

by canals and about thirty-five years ago these canals were the streets. All traffic was carried on in boats and boats took the place of wagons and carriages. There are still about seventy-five miles of canals in Bangkok, but bridges have been built over them, paved streets have been laid and you can now drive almost anywhere in a carriage. Ten years ago there were only about nine miles of paved streets. Now there are over fifty miles and new streets are being opened up every year. The American bridge makers might do a good business in supplying the bridges. The old ones of iron and wood are being replaced by modern ones of iron and steel. The king himself builds one steel bridge every year out of his private funds as a gift to the city. This bridge is open to the public, with special ceremonies, on his birthday. At present the most of our bridge building materials come from England."

Water Works Contractor.

"I see that our consul general, Hamilton King, says that Bangkok is unhealthy from lack of water works." "That matter is being remedied," replied Mr. Loftus. "The government is now investigating the subject and within a short time we will have a new water works and sewerage system. I don't know where the supplies will come from. It takes an enormous amount of pipe for a city so scattered as Bangkok and whether we shall import it or make it ourselves is a question. Our people are skillful in handling clay and it may be that the pipes will be of pottery or we may establish foundries to make them. We are trying to develop the country in every way and can afford to spend more if thereby we can find a home industry."

"We are improving our country greatly by digging canals and by opening up irrigated lands. It seems strange to speak of irrigation in a land as well watered as Siam, but there are large tracts that have been brought under cultivation in this way. The vast plain of southern Siam, which has some of the richest soil in the world, has been opened up by canals. The greater part of it was a jungle until within the last fifty years, when canals began to be dug. We have now canals from river to river, and the canals serve as the highways of the country. In addition to the government works there are private canal companies which have received large concessions of land. The Siam Canal and Irrigation company is one which has been working for years and which has brought much waste land under cultivation. The territory which it has was swamp and jungle ten years ago, but it is now settled by over 70,000 people. These companies get their revenues from the sales of the land bordering on their canals. The price is limited to \$2.75 gold per acre, and at this price they can pay good dividends. There are still vast tracts of waste lands which need opening up. The situation is being carefully studied and expert engineers will make plans by which these lands can be developed and brought under cultivation."

No Debts and Money to Burn.

"Such public improvements will need a vast deal of money, will they not? I suppose Siam has a large public debt already?" "It has no debt whatever," replied the Siamese secretary. "It has, on the contrary, a cash surplus of about 25,000,000 teals, including \$1,000,000 which was lately invested in British consols. Our government is one of the few in the world which are not in debt. The revenues more than meet the expenses and the country is increasing its riches from year to year." "Where does the revenue come from?" "From the usual taxes and licenses," re-

plied Mr. Loftus. "We have our internal revenue taxes, a capitation tax and a very low customs tax. We charge only 3 per cent on imports, so you will see that Siam is practically a free trade country, and your people can ship there with as little restrictions as to any part of the world. The tax fixed by the foreign powers for China is higher, and in Japan and other eastern countries it is many times as great. Our people welcome imports, and they will welcome American travelers. Instead of fighting your own way from place to place through a riotous population as in China, come to us and you will be courteously received and made at home."

"How about our missionaries?" said I. "Your country is a Buddhist country. Does it tolerate Christianity?" "Yes," was the reply. "Siam tolerates all religions. The American missionaries are much liked, and they are allowed to go where they please and to teach what they please. They have schools in the different cities and they do much good."

"As to Buddhism, that is the prevailing religion. We have thousands of priests and thousands of temples. Many of the priests are teachers, and they have their schools scattered here and there over the country. We are doing much in education. The government established a normal college in 1892. We have boarding schools at Bangkok for the sons and daughters of princes and nobles. These have English teachers, and we have other schools with thousands of students in which English is taught. There is an educational department in Bangkok, and we have a competitive examination every year, open to all Siamese which gives scholarships for study abroad."

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Satisfied Anyhow

Atlanta Constitution: "Maria," said the colored citizen, "I feels lak my time bez come at las; I is mighty low." "Ain't you been eatin' de kunnel's water-millions?" "Oh, veg." "Well, didn't you know he done pizened de las' one er dem?" "Did he pizen um?" "He sho' did." "Dat settles me. But, Marla—" "What you want?" "I wuz all day at um, en I eat nine befo' I quit."

The EGGS
 the coffee roaster uses
 to glaze his coffee with—
 would you eat that kind of
 eggs? Then why drink them?
Lion Coffee
 has no coating of storage eggs,
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 unadulterated, fresh, strong
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