

traders, the reply is that those factors would have been unavailing by themselves; the results are due to a fortunate and perhaps unique combination between European energy and technical knowledge, Chinese labour and the foresight and intelligence of the small handful of outstanding individuals that the Siamese themselves have thrown up. Some European advisers have been, indeed some still are, not properly used, being cold-shouldered and allowed to deal with nothing of importance. Others have proved unscrupulous and self-seeking persons. But on the whole the Siamese seem to me, at any rate in the past, to have made good use of European brains and energy; and that by itself is creditable.

4. It is undoubtedly the ambition of the Siamese to dispense sooner or later with outside help and to run their country by themselves. There is, perhaps, some danger of their pressing forward too hurriedly to this goal, although, if they are to maintain the position in the world which they claimed when they entered the war, their need for European brains must long remain as imperative as their need for Chinese labour. Any modification of the present form of Government in a constitutional or representative direction (a development not outside the bounds of possibility) would probably stimulate the process of discarding European advisers or relegating them to more and more subordinate positions; for "young Siam," like "young" movements elsewhere, identifies democracy with Siam for the Siamese. This movement, however, is still in its infancy, and there is no likelihood of its growth being hastened by the attraction of Siam into the orbit of modern industrial production, that unhealthy forcing-house in which the national consciousness of so many backward races has prematurely sprouted. For there is no iron here and no coal. Siam is, and to all appearances will always be, a country living on the export of rice (for which the world demand should increase), with tin and teak and sugar, and perhaps some day cotton, as subsidiary second strings. Her peasants are never likely to be herded from the paddy field to the factory. Thus the conditions are exceptionally favourable for the smooth and gradual transformation of an Oriental autocracy (with a theocratic tinge) into a moderately progressive, albeit agricultural, modern State, without having to pass, as Japan had to pass, through the ordeal of war. I see no reason why this interesting experiment should not run a successful course, provided that the desire for good government, which at present inspires the ruling class like a fashion or even a craze, is not subjected to too severe a strain. At the moment the omens are propitious, with retrenchment and reorganisation being vigorously pressed on, and a well-meaning, serious-minded Sovereign on the throne recently occupied by an extravagant and irresponsible dilettante. Certain clouds may perhaps be descried on the horizon. I have touched on the opium danger in my despatch No. 113 of the 18th instant. Another danger seems to me to be the wastage of the Siamese forests, which, since the railways burn wood, is stimulated by the mania for railway building. Deforestation means deterioration of climate, drying up of waterways and, ultimately, an increased annual risk of the failure of the rice crop, on which Siamese finance, and incidentally our own trade interests, largely depend. Finally, the stage must sooner or later be reached where further progress will be impossible without a better co-ordination of Government departments. Now it is precisely this which is most difficult of achievement, where Ministers are princes intriguing against one another under an autocracy; and it might therefore be argued that when co-ordination becomes imperative it will fail to be enforced, and that the failure will promote reaction. But these are matters for the future. At the moment it is not unreasonable to hope that the Siamese will continue with some consistency to follow the path of administrative virtue and economic sanity. That they should do so is, in the absence of political complications, our main if not our sole concern in this country, since backsliding in these respects must be detrimental to our trade interests and to those of the British Asiatic population here. Thus the first duty of His Majesty's representative at Bangkok must, as I see it, normally be to watch for the symptoms of deterioration and to do what he can in a quite way to forestall and check them.

5. What are the prospects of our being able to exert an influence for good at the present stage of this country's development? I should not care to hazard an answer to this question, but it seems to me clear that we can expect to exert little or no influence unless certain conditions are fulfilled.

6. In the first place, our hands will be largely tied if relations are bad between Siam and the British territories of Malaya and Burma, with whom she has common frontiers and increasingly close economic intercourse. Secondly, if the Siamese should conceive that British policy were directed towards keeping them in leading strings, advice from His Majesty's representative would tend to fall on deaf and