

The King of Sedang and his Stamp Issue.

The *Australian Philatelist* makes an extract from "The Far East," a most interesting book by Henry Norman, who gives the full history of the kingdom of Sedang.

One of the most remarkable romances of modern Eastern history has been connected with these French colonies. In the spring of 1889, there appeared at Hong Kong a tall, well built Frenchman with a bushy brown beard and very long legs, who called himself Marie David de Mayrena, and distributed visiting cards with words "S. M. le Roi des Sedangs" printed upon them. He had had an adventurous career in the Far East, in the course of which he had more than once displayed great personal courage in guerilla warfare. At last his wanderings brought him to the region of Sedangs a tribe inhabiting part of the Hinterland of Annam, a region not so well known then as it has since become. By these people he was elected king, and of the genuineness of the election there can be no doubt whatever. He was at first recognized by the French missionaries and the French authorities, and I myself have seen correspondence and treaties which place his claim beyond question. Of these treaties there were a score signed between Mayrena and the chiefs of the different tribes (here follow extracts from some of the more important). * * * I should add that I give these details not only for their romantic interest, but also when Mayrena was thrown over by the French authorities he was pooh-poohed as a common liar, and now that he is dead and the whole strange adventure at an end, I take pleasure in showing that he was not wholly an imposter, in spite of his vanity and his follies. It should be added in explanation of certain phrases that his French was not always above reproach. To continue, the relations that had subsisted between Mayrena and the priests are clearly shown by the following passage in the treaty, which, like most of this strange history, is now published for the

first time, so far as my knowledge goes: "Considerant que se nous detonons la couronne du Royaume Sedang, nous la devons aux R. R. Peres Missionnaires de la Societe des Missions Etrangeres de Paris; que c'est grace a leurs concours que nous avons pu expliquer notre volonte et parcourir le Royaume avant d'etre élu; que ce sont eux qui ont servi d'intermediaires entre nous et ces chefs pour traduire nos pensees"— * * * "Le drapeau national sera bleu uni avec une croix blanche a l'etoile rouge au centre," * * *

When Mayrena first turned up at Hong Kong, he was vouched for by the French Consul, and introduced by him to everybody, including the Governor, in consequence of which his social position was sealed by an invitation to dinner at Government House. At this time he was an astounding figure, when in his royal attire. He wore a short yellow jacket with enormous galons on the cuffs, a broad blue ribbon, a magenta sash in which was stuck a long curved sword worn across the front of the body, white trousers with a broad gold stripe, and a white helmet with a gold crown and three stars. He distributed broadcast the "Order of Marie I.", beginning with the captain of the little Danish steamer Freyr, in return for the hoisting of his royal standard in Haipong harbour and continuing with the Governor of Hong Kong, who was caused no small embarrassment in getting rid of the impossible ribbon and cross. He used note paper with a huge gold crown and coat-of arms upon it, gave large orders for jewellery, and conducted himself generally like a crowned head. * *

Mayrena succeeded in getting a few Hong Kong merchants to enter into an arrangement with him by which he conceded to them the right of developing the country of the Sedangs, in return for certain duties upon trade and exports. But the collapse came, of course, when the French authorities changed their policy and took a line of direct opposition to him. Even the missionaries, who had enabled him to secure the treaties, of which they themselves were the official witnesses denounced him as an imposter. He then