

Buddhist philosopher-king, in his domesticities at least, proved to be much as other kings of Siam had been, and indeed, in their circumstances, could scarcely have escaped being. Even at the wintry age of sixty-three, he still retained the warmest and most versatile appreciation for any kind of charm, or even utility, in women: and could never see that sort of prize without an overpowering itch to annex it for his own exclusive deglutition. He was bitterly jealous of his younger brother, a much more shining and popular figure than himself, who held, under the peculiar institutions of the country, the splendid but impotent position of "second king;" and treated him both meanly and cruelly. No sooner had this brilliant young prince been removed from his path by a premature and lingering death (with which, however, Mongkut was never, I think, suspected of having had anything to do), than the venerable survivor, though he had been deeply and truly moved by his brother's untimely fate and had become completely reconciled to him in a very pathetic scene of parting before the end, outraged even the decencies of Siam by transferring that now sincerely lamented brother's beautiful and queenly widow to his own harem. Maha Mongkut was, I should think, by long odds, the most erudite monarch of his day; was, in fact, a sort of eastern James the Sixth, the most sapient fool in heathendom or Christendom. He was deeply versed in the wisdom of the Orient, and not unacquainted with western science. He had a good knowledge of Latin and English, picked up from his excellent friends the Protestant American missionaries (the Jesuits and all else that was French he feared and hated), besides being, as I have already indicated, an acknowledged authority on Sanscrit and Pali. His theological views (although he was once provoked roundly to declare: "I hate the Bible mostly") were liberal and clear to a degree very rare indeed among English bishops and non-conformist lights, or Roman priests. His public policy was remarkably enlightened, especially as regards hospitality to European trade and material civilization. Siam, under his guidance, inaugurated a new era for the East, taking the