

impracticable offerings, cocoa-nuts, sugar, rice-cakes, and beans. The young prince took both her hands, laid his brow on them, and said: "M'am dear, come back please." The king himself showed his very best side, which was very good indeed, and took his leave of her in really monumental words: "M'am, you much beloved by our common people and all inhabitants of palace and royal children. Everyone is in affliction of your departure and even that opium-eating secretary P'hra Alack [the King's foster-brother whom he used to throttle for the relief of his feelings when their immediate object was sour grapes] is very low down in his heart because you will go. *It shall be because you must be a good and true lady.* [Yes, Your Majesty! It shall indeed be so.] I am angry and often lose my temper though I have large respect for you. *But nevertheless you ought to know you are difficult woman, and more difficult than generality.* But you will forget and come back to my service, for I have more confidence on you every day. Good-bye." It was the last he saw of his "one great difficulty."

With all his faults there was much of the right stuff in Mongkut, and his fair pupil in Sanscrit and Pali owed him more than his willing services as her Pundit in these tongues; more by a good deal than she ever quite acknowledged or was aware of. She had given much, but she had also received much, in Siam. The seven years' wrestle with that dusky angel by the river Meinam had been the making of her. The good are apt to be guilty of a certain ingratitude to the wicked. For one thing, who provides them with the flinty stuff of indispensable resistance on which their virtue has struck its light? And poor Mongkut, like other tough subjects, was, after all, far from being mere flint. He could vibrate quite harmoniously on the whole, at times, if with some still unresolved scrapes of lingering petulance and self-assertion, to the qualities which the friction of his own perversities had chafed into music. He had, at least, a singularly clear head, a most rare and precious possession, and one scarcely, I think, compatible with an utterly hardened heart.