

SIAM AND LAOS,

AS SEEN BY

OUR AMERICAN MISSIONARIES.

"Siam has not been disciplined by English and French guns, like China, but the country has been opened by missionaries."--Remark of His Grace the late Ex-Regent of Siam.

FULLY ILLUSTRATED.

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of the rocky coast, and doves and pigeons are in endless variety. Winged things of myriad kinds troop, great and small—immense butterflies, jewel-like beetles, brilliant dragon-flies, thousands of moths—while at dusk swarms of fire-flies illumine the glades, and the night is noisy with the flitting and buzzing of the insect world.

Animals fierce and large as those of Africa infest these jungles; their footprints are all along the paths—wild elephants and boars, the tapir, the royal tiger, the one-horned rhinoceros, the buffalo, herds of deer, wild hogs and squirrels, afford a sportsman plenty of use for his gun; unceasing flying-foxes, and chattering monkeys linked, chain-fashion, hand to tail, or pelting each other with fruit and nuts. Innumerable water-snakes glide among the reeds; the cobra or hooded serpent is abundant; surly alligators, with their ugly red mouths wide open, and huge saurians bask in sunny spots or float like logs upon the surface of the water; leeches abound in the swampy lowlands; frogs and turtles and tortoises, larger than any ever seen in temperate regions, throng the marshes and streams.

Indo-China also offers a first field of inquiry to the geologist. The peninsula is very rich in minerals; gold is said to be most productive at the foot of the "Three Hundred Peaks;" copper and tin are found in large quantities; silver in connection with copper and lead; and there are

formulae, and the doctor who is so fortunate as to own one of these books is held in high repute for his superior learning, notwithstanding he may not be able to decipher a line of it. Practically, the Laos, so far as the average doctor is concerned, have no medical treatises.

The Laos are without a definite knowledge of any of the organs or functions of the human body; no Harvey or Sylvius has ever arisen among them. All of their theories concerning the bodily functions and the four elements are merely philosophic guesses. Imagination has taken the place of reason and experiment. Speculation furnishes them with a satisfactory solution of the problem, "Why is it that instead of flesh (muscles) only, tendons are found in the human body?"

The Laos divide diseases into two classes. The first class includes all those disorders which may be considered as simply disturbances of equilibrium caused by an undue preponderance or diminution of one of the four elements—wind, fire, earth and water; the second class embraces all those more serious disorders of the human system which are due directly or indirectly to the influence of offended spirits.

The Laos materia medica embraces a considerable variety of medicines, nearly every one of which is supposed to be a specific in some disease; and, although his ideas of the medicinal

qualities of these drugs may be entirely theoretical, not to say fanciful, the Laos doctor administers them just as freely as if he had experimentally demonstrated their physiological properties. The bones, teeth, blood and gall of the tiger, bear, elephant, rhinoceros and crocodile are among the most highly-esteemed remedies; besides their specific curative properties, these medicines impart the courage of the tiger, the stability, dignity and longevity of the elephant, the solemnity and tranquillity of the crocodile, the equanimity, contentment and philosophic indifference to external things and other virtues characteristic of the rhinoceros. Likewise, they eat the bones of the raven to protect them from evil spirits, and perhaps also to enable them to eat with impunity and relish of any dish; it is to be feared that certain purloining instincts of this bird have been communicated in this way!

Patient observation and intelligent experimental investigation are entirely unknown to the Laos medicine-man; it is doubtful if he has, either by intelligent experiment or by accident, arrived at one solitary verifiable fact either in physiology or therapeutics; satisfied with his supposed stock of knowledge, he has no desire to increase it.

When called to see a patient the Laos doctor states authoritatively what the ailment is; then proceeds to prepare a dose of medicine, which