

# SIAM IN 1688.

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TRANSLATION OF AN EARLY NARRATIVE

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The events which led to the overthrow of Phya Vijayen (Constance Faulcon) and the consequent departure of the French from Siam, in 1688, in the reign of Somdet Phra Narayana are somewhat obscure. Contemporary Siamese records have not been found, and it cannot be denied that the history which was compiled in 1795, and afterwards revised by Somdet Phra Paramanujit in 1840, treated the events as far as Constance Faulcon and the French Embassies were concerned more in the light of an interesting tale than as history.

The French records were all written from an individual standpoint; and it can be seen from these records that dissensions frequently arose amongst the French and that, for the most part, each pursued a policy for his own ends. The chief actors are best described as amateurs. This is especially the case with Constance Faulcon himself, who by nature clever, but uneducated and unscrupulous, became vain-glorious and overbearing in dealing with affairs of state which were beyond his grasp and control, and he brought upon himself the contempt and hatred of most Siamese without gaining the love or esteem of the foreigners. Phra Phetracha, sober and unscrupulous, placed himself at the head of the discontented party and thus at the death of Phra Narayana had no difficulty in regaining by vigorous measures that independence for Siam of which Faulcon and the French Missionaries and Envoys apparently had tried to deprive it.

The narrative of which I give a verbal translation in the following pages, and to which I have added a few notes to show, from Siamese sources, the personal status of the Siamese concerned, is said to have been written by Desfarges, who commanded the French troops in Bangkok.

The publisher's preface states how the MS. came into his hands, but we are justified in looking upon this statement with a certain suspicion. Whilst there is no doubt that the narrative is a true contemporary record, it was in all probability written by a Dutchman, attached to the Dutch factory in Ayuddhya, who had the greatest interest in preserving as far as possible the monopoly of the trade which would have been seriously interfered with if the French had succeeded in establishing themselves in Ayuddhya and gained a paramount influence there. He would thus try to make the acts of Phra Phetracha appear in as favourable a light as possible. A Dutch translation of the report appeared in 1692, and we have to look upon this as most likely the original.\*

That Desfarges could not have been the author is made clear from the facts recorded by Lanier, who states in his *Etude historique sur les Relations de la France et du Royaume de Siam*, page 174 :—

“Some weeks later (*i.e.*, after December 5th, 1689) Desfarges (who had retired from Bhuket to Bengal) received from the Court of France his letters of recall. L'Oriflamme was starting for Europe convoying two vessels of the India Company, the *Lonre* (? *Loire*) and *Saint Nicolas*, with rich merchandize. The officers and two hundred soldiers embarked on these with their commander in the month of March, 1690. The passage was wretched, illness broke out amongst the passengers, and *Desfarges and his sons*, the Captain de *Lestritte*, de la *Salle* and half of the crew succumbed.”

I have given as an appendix a translation of a letter

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\* Aanmerklijk en Naaukeurig Verhaal der Staats-Omkeringen, Nu Laatste in't Jaar 1688, in Siam voorgefallen. Bevattende de geledene smaadheden in, en't uydrijven der Franssen uyt dat Rijk. Uit het Handschrift van den Oppergesaghebber der Franse aldaar, Door A. v. H. in't Nederduits vertaald. Tot Leiden Bij Frederik Haaring. 1692.



said to have been written by an officer of the French garrison to one of his friends regarding the state of religion in Siam. The letter is a proof that even at that day persons drew largely on their imagination when a political purpose had to be served. The writer speaks in the introduction about several letters written which had also been replied to. Now considering that Laloubère, in whose suite the officer must have travelled, arrived in Siam on September 27th, 1687, and left again on February 3rd, 1688, and that the French occupation of Bangkok ceased about September, 1688, it is difficult to understand how letters could have been received and answered.





A NARRATIVE  
OF THE  
REVOLUTIONS WHICH TOOK PLACE  
IN SIAM

In the year 1688.



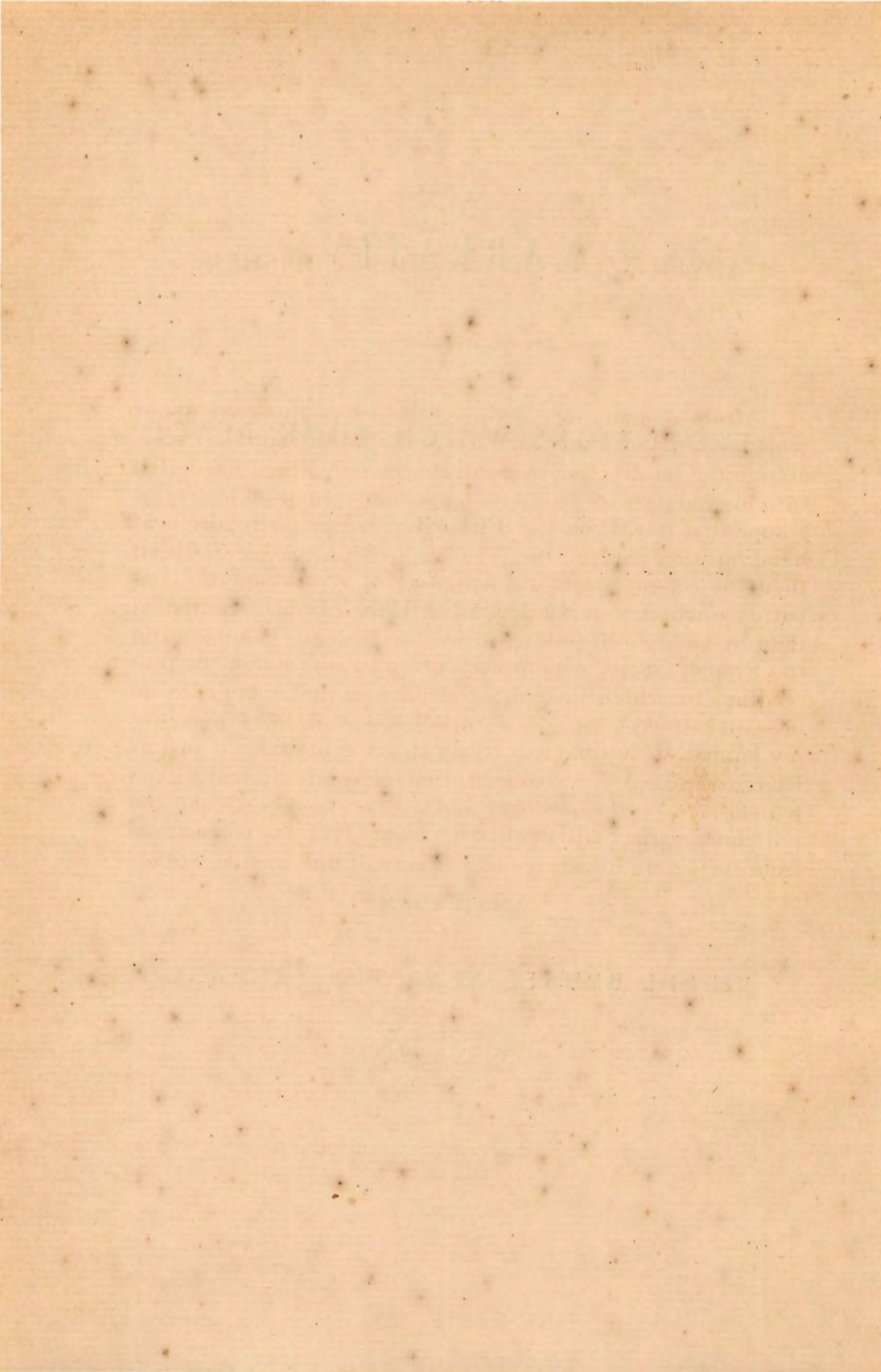
AMSTERDAM

PIERRE BRUNEL NEAR THE EXCHANGE

M. D. C. LXXXXI.





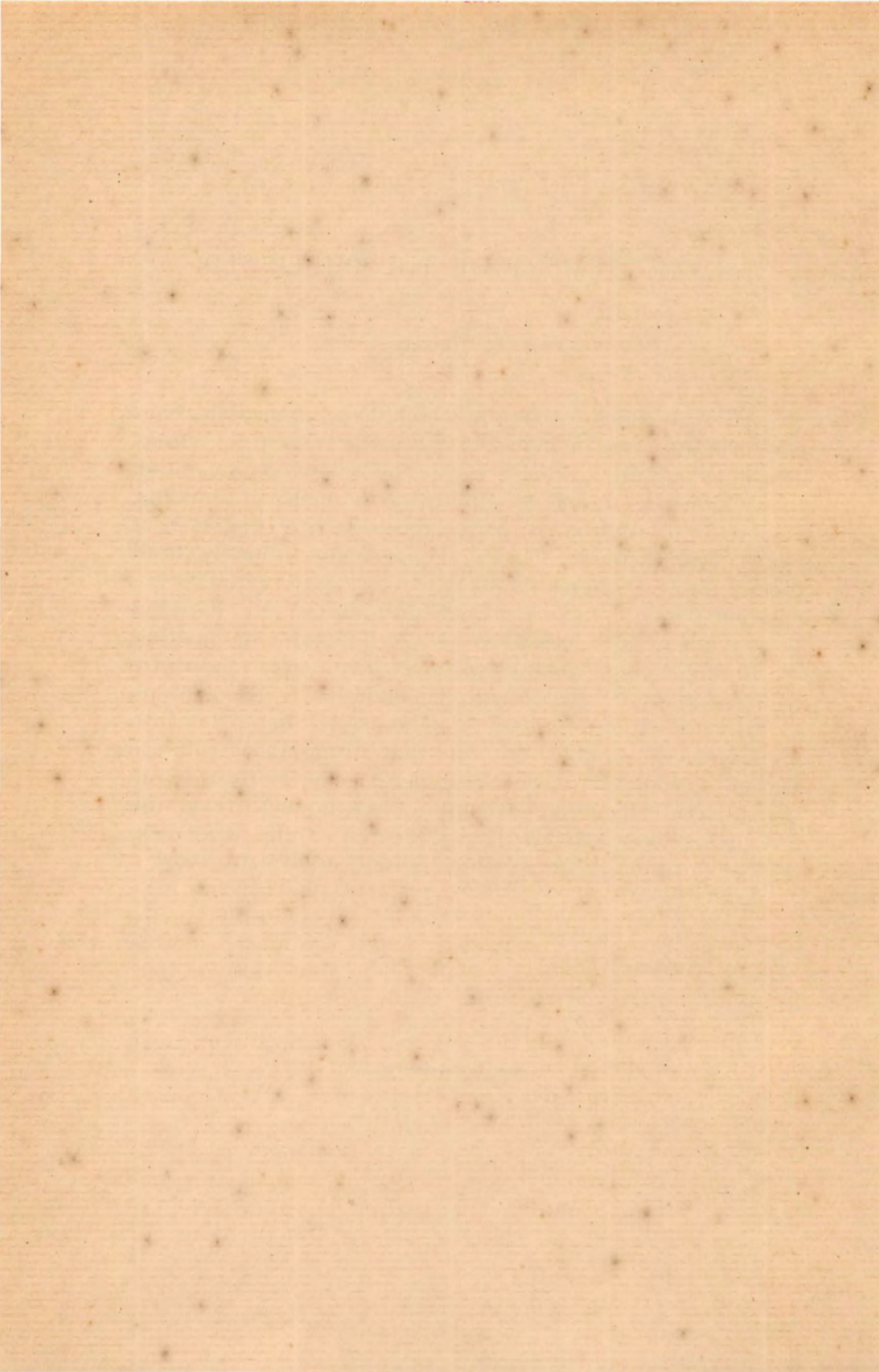


## ADVERTIZEMENT OF THE PUBLISHER.



After so many accounts which have appeared about what has happened in Siam, I have thought it would be agreeable to the public, to communicate the one which has fallen into my hands, and which contains many remarkable details. I hope that it will be the better received as no report is at hand on the part of the French to show what induced them to retreat from the Kingdom of Siam: and the impatience which is felt regarding it, cannot be better satisfied than by an account published by the General commanding the French troops, who himself gives an account of the proceedings in which he took a conspicuous part. There is no necessity of explaining how this Manuscript has fallen into my hands. It is sufficient to say that I reproduce it just as I have received it, with exception of some clerical errors which have been corrected: and I have no doubt that the judicious reader will readily be assured of its correctness from the original features which he will find in this work.







# A NARRATIVE OF THE REVOLUTIONS

which took place

IN

SIAM

in the year 1688.

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People will no doubt be surprised to hear of the strange Revolutions which have taken place in the Kingdom of Siam, and to learn that the Frenchmen have left it a year after their arrival, notwithstanding the promises given by the Court regarding the stability and safety of their establishment.

Experience has clearly shown us, that it was not possible to depend on the goodwill of a King, whom a mortal illness was bringing to the grave; nor on the good intentions of his successor, who was very unstable; nor on the precarious fortune of *Sieur Constance*, who moreover had not all the credit and authority which he was believed to have; nor yet on the good disposition, respect and love of the people towards the French. Indeed have we not seen them, on the contrary, full of hatred and fury in order to ruin us? I thought it my duty to write an account of what has happened myself, as no one better than myself could know why I adopted the course I have taken; and it was not feasible to communicate it to many people, who however will not abstain from writing what they think about it.

One will find, as this narrative proceeds, crowns overthrown, two Princes<sup>1</sup> and an adopted son of the King<sup>2</sup> assassinated, the loss of the house and the life of *Sieur Constance*,<sup>3</sup> several great Mandarins in chains, a Siamese cleverly mounting the throne, finally the whole Kingdom with a great number of foreigners taking up arms against us to kill us by open force, after having tried in vain to do so by all

sorts of tricks. One will see, moreover, in the midst of all these strange revolutions the name of our great King feared even in this furthest corner of the world; and a handful of Frenchmen nearly without supplies, without ammunition, and without means of getting either, in a wretched place badly fortified, in the midst of the mud, of nearly continuous rains, and of numberless other hardships, resisting a whole Kingdom, which had shut them in, and which was finally compelled after a siege of five months, in spite of the resolution taken to destroy them, and in spite of the help rendered by foreign nations, who had come for the same purpose, to submit to the necessity of supplying them with ships and provisions to enable them to retire.

But above all it is necessary to make known the state, in which the Court of Siam was when I arrived, in order that the changes which have taken place may be more easily understood.

The King of Siam seemed to me always to have been full of consideration for our August Monarch, whose heroic actions delighted him in the accounts which were given to him. This Prince surely showed in his face the signs of greatness, and of a distinguished mind: he naturally appreciated foreigners more than his own subjects, whom he ever treated with a little cruelty; and this made him more feared than loved in his Kingdom. Although he was only 54 years old, he was nevertheless attacked by an illness, to which it could easily be seen he would succumb.

Two Princes, his brothers, were those who according to the customs of the Kingdom had to succeed to the throne, as the King had no son. The eldest one was deprived of the use of all his limbs: the younger feigned deafness, in order not to expose himself to the loss of his life, on the first suspicion which the King could have against him. They were both perfectly united; the elder voluntarily ceded the whole Kingdom to his younger brother owing to his infirmities; but neither of them was in the good graces of the King; they did not take part in any affairs, and they saw scarcely any one but their own servants.



The King of Siam had a daughter,<sup>4</sup> who as rumour had it was secretly married to the Young Prince, although the case is not quite clear. This Princess who was twenty-eight years old, was of a proud and haughty disposition, attached to the Religion and customs of her ancestors; she had also retired from the Court on account of the dissatisfaction expressed to her by her father, and she hated *Sieur Constance* in consequence, because she believed him to have been the cause of it.

*Prapié*, the adopted son of the King, whom some people, without ground, however, pretend to be his natural son, was most in favour with his Prince. It is even apparent that the King would have left the Crown to him, if he could: but as he was of low origin, his partisans in such an event would have been only very few: neither the Mandarins nor the people who knew of his origin would have recognized him against right and justice due to the princes, who were well liked.

Amongst all the other *Grandeés* of the Court, was one who could be easily distinguished, and who appeared to me, from the first time I saw him, to have something distinguished and grand about him much above the others. His name was *Opra Petcheratcha*<sup>5</sup>; his family was one of the oldest and most distinguished. He was a foster-brother of the King and about his age. Some even say that he was of the Real Royal race, from whom the father of the Reigning King had taken away by force the Crown. This Mandarin had acquired, by the love he manifested towards religion, the respect and universal affection shown to all *talapoins*, of whom there are a great number and who enjoy great credit amongst the people, who moreover saw in him a truly Siamese heart full of respect for the nation, and of contempt for the others. As he was, however, a great statesman, he took care not to show openly the intention which he had at heart, and which he would reveal in due time. He knew how to dissimulate before his Prince his true feelings, affecting always in order to avoid all suspicions a desire for a secluded life, and to be relieved from all affairs, and constantly refusing for himself, and even for



his son, the most considerable offices and dignities, to which the King wished to raise him. He enjoyed in spite of that not less consideration. He was always of the first of the Council, and had more easily access to and more credit at the Court than the *Sieur Constance*, who was believed to be all powerful, and who on his part always tried to persuade us thereof, in lowering as far as he could the authority of all others so that he alone should be esteemed and trusted.

Nevertheless, although he was in great favour with the King of Siam, because this Prince found him alone capable to treat with foreigners, by reason of the great knowledge he said he possessed of all their customs and of all Courts of Europe; there were a great many mandarins who held higher office and had a greater authority, to whom he had to make the "*Sombaie*" that is to render them on all occasions homage, and he could not, as they, enter into the Chamber of the King, unless he was called.

In truth this foreigner had a lively and wide spirit capable of many matters, and given to large enterprises. His conduct was very pleasant, if he wished it to be so; his conversation was very agreeable, and he knew how to show his value before the King, from whom he had got a considerable fortune, considering the resources of the country. It took time to get thoroughly acquainted with him; later on I found in him want of straight-forwardness, and sincerity, also an unmeasured ambition, and too great an aptitude to get offended and to prosecute those whom he believed looked down upon him. This attracted to him the hatred of all these people and of most of the foreigners.

This is in few words what appeared to me most remarkable at the Court of Siam, for the understanding of what follows.

With regard to the French, I had in Bangkok only about 200 soldiers with their officers. *Monsieur de Bruan* was at Mergui with three of our best companies: and after his departure I was obliged to hand over thirty-five of our best men, with three or four officers, to be placed on the



vessels of the King of Siam, sent in pursuit of some pirates according to an order transmitted on his part by *Sieur Constance*.

Of the small number left to me, there were still a number sick, and sickness diminished their numbers day by day. And yet at the place in which we were, work on the fortifications had just been started, and these were so large that we wanted at least 1,200 men to guard them well. I had wished that no such great place had been taken, in order that we might be better under cover, and better in position to defend us against anything which might happen to us. I could not, however, persuade *Sieur Constance* to change his design, which he had formed before our arrival : however much I insisted on having workmen, and however much trouble I took myself, in spite of my age and the heat of the sun, to be always on the spot to see that the works were progressing, there remained to be finished, when matters became serious, two bastions, two curtains and one cavalier. I had furnished myself with 2,000 palisades, which were of great use afterwards : but not a single one had been erected.

In the month of March the King was in worse health than usual, and nearly unable to attend to affairs. *Prapié* then tried to play a part and to gather together some people who were devoted to him. *Opra Petchrachas* on his part, who had taken measures long ago and who had in his hands the Mandarins, who kept the roll of the people, also secretly collected in the Pagoda in the neighbourhood of *Louvo* as many people as he could. It was not difficult for him to attach to himself nearly all the Kingdom, as far from making known his true design, he always asserted that he wished nothing more than to retire to some temple with the *Talapoins* to live there, he said, a solitary life : but he also insinuated to the people, that before doing so he would use all his mind and all his strength and even his life, if it were necessary, to place the Princes on the throne which belonged to them, and that he knew that *Prapié* and *Sieur Constance* intended to deprive them of it. To gain all hearts



he spread rumours throughout the Kingdom that the French had only come to destroy the Royal Race, their religion and their customs, in subjecting them to Prapié and to Sieur Constance who would become the second in the Kingdom if the thing succeeded. It was easy for him by these artifices to place all the great and small people in his party and to excite them strongly against us, as moreover the Princes, the true heirs of the Crown, regarded him always as a faithful subject, who was only actuated by the zeal he showed for them, and who regarded Prapié and Sieur Constance as their greatest enemies.

Sieur Constance, from whom a great deal of what occurred could not remain hidden, in spite of the good temper which the great Mandarins always showed to him to humour him, sent me in the middle of April an order on the part of the King of Siam, to proceed to Louvo with the best part of my troops. I started from Bangkok with seventy men and five officers, very much troubled about the rest of the garrison, which I was obliged to leave behind in such a small number. As soon as we arrived near Siam, through which place we had to pass in order to proceed to Louvo, all gates were closed and everything was in uproar as if their greatest enemies had arrived. I heard at once from the Bishop of Metellopolis, from the Abbé de Lionne and from Sieur Veret, the head of the French factory, that a public rumour was about that the King of Siam had died, that everything was in arms in Louvo and on the roads, that there was a rumour of arresting Sieur Constance, and that many things had happened to the greatest disadvantage of the French. There was news also, I heard, that a number of soldiers had gone down to Bangkok, with a view, it was said, to assassinate the French who were there.

On hearing this news, I did not deem it wise to continue on my way. I stopped, therefore, in the neighbourhood of Siam and I wrote at once to Sieur Constance about the said rumours, which were publicly spread stating that I thought it better for his welfare and for ours that he should himself come where I expected him, in order to offer our



services to the Princes, the true heirs of the Crown, who were both in the city of Siam, and that we should thereby dissipate the suspicions which people had against us.

But whether *Sieur Constance* did not believe the evil so great as it was, or whether he was no longer in a position to retire from Louvo, or whether he had an understanding with *Prapié* (as it is was said that he was in agreement with him afterwards), he did not listen to my advice, and I returned, therefore, after his reply, at once to Bangkok, in order to try to keep the troops whom the King had done me the honour of entrusting to me.

The future has shown that I could not have acted otherwise unless I had taken a bad and unjust part and without the almost certain loss of everything French in the Kingdom. For it has been proved by enquiries I made of two Siamese Mandarins, whom we had in our hands, that at the time when *Sieur Constance* wanted us to come up, *Pitrachas* was entirely master of the Palace and had at his command more than 30,000 men both in Louvo and on the roads, not counting the forces of the Princes who were then joined with him against the other party, which evidently *Sieur Constance* wanted me to join, without venturing to declare it to me.

*Opra Petrachas*, seeing that we had returned to Bangkok, and that it was not easy to gain us over as long as we were not divided, tried every imaginable means to oblige the two Princes and the Princess to come to Louvo, in order to have them in his hands. It was of the utmost importance to him that these Princes and the French should not come together; and this made him try everything to have all of them well disposed towards him. It was impossible for him to go on into these matters as long as the Princes remained in the city of Siam, of which they were masters, and the French at Bangkok, since mutual help could easily be rendered, and would have been given on the first suspicion raised by him. Such suspicion, moreover, would at the same time have destroyed those which he raised against us. He therefore sent several mandarins and wrote several times to the Princes inviting them to proceed to Louvo, asserting that the King,



(who, it is true, was not yet dead, but was unable to act owing to the state to which his illness had reduced him), wanted to see them and place one of them on the throne during his life time; that it was of great consequence that they should not lose time but should proceed to Louvo to take there before the whole Court the oath of fidelity, in order not to let Prapié have an opportunity to advance his affairs to their prejudice; and that as a faithful subject, zealous for their service, he had put the things in such order that there was nothing to fear for them.

The Princes hesitated much to render themselves to these pressing prayers, not on account of any mistrust they had at that time of Pitrachas, but because they were entirely Masters of the City of Siam and they did not know how far they would be it in Louvo, where Prapié and Sieur Constance were, from whom they expected some regrettable incident. This made them much more eager to make their public entry in the Palace of Siam, in order to proclaim the young prince as King, and then to enjoin the mandarins who were at Louvo to come and recognize him. That was also much in accordance with the desire of the Princess, who was or should have been his wife. And certainly it has been shown afterwards that this was the only means they should have adopted; but they could not resist the urgent prayers made to them by a man whom they considered the most faithful, the most equitable and the most disinterested in the Kingdom.

The young prince then proceeded to Louvo together with the Princess. Opra Pitrachas had sent them a large and fine escort on the road: he received them with all marks of possible submission, made them the first Sombaie, and had it rendered to them by all great mandarins. It is said that only Prapié and Constance were not eager to render it, and that this latter having come sometimes afterwards, the Prince would not receive him.

It is quite probable that Pitrachas, seeing himself Master and sure of those who could aspire to the Crown, intended waiting for the death of the King, which was likely to take place soon, before taking any action. But having



received information that Prapié, who saw the bad state in which his affairs were, had called in some troops of armed men to brave his fate, which could only be fatal to him under the sovereignty of the princes who were incensed against him, this clever politician took at once this pretext, to make the princes and the great nobles agree to have him arrested, and thus get rid of him: and he asked for nothing better in order to show his pretended zeal than to take it upon himself. He lost no time, and although Prapié was then in the apartment of the King, which he scarcely ever left owing to the services which he rendered the King during his illness, Opra Pitrachas by some device cleverly attracted him to the door, and from there by violence, had him massacred on the spot without heeding the request, which the dying King made on his behalf, on whose mind it weighed heavily that one of the Kingdom whom he liked most was treated in such a way.

This first action of the tragedy having been completed Opra Pitrachas seized the opportunity of arresting *Sieur Constance*. He gave orders that nothing should be made known of what had passed in the Palace, and sent him word on the part of the King to proceed to the Palace. *Sieur Constance* who knew nothing of what had taken place, and who nevertheless feared that some regrettable incident might take place, asked three French officers who were at Louvo, amongst whom was my son the chevalier, to accompany him. As soon as he had entered the Palace Opra Pitrachas approached him with a number of armed men, of whom there were plenty at Court, took him by the arm, and in a harsh and contemptuous tone told him, that he arrested him for having conspired with Prapié against the Kingdom and misappropriated its funds. At the time he spoke to him, there were several people with drawn swords, ready to strike him at the first word of command of this mandarin. The French officers who expected nothing of that sort asked him what he wanted them to do for him; but he replied that they should not do anything, and even hand over their swords, for which they had been asked. Pitrachas had at that time enough presence of mind, to see that



it was important that the French should not know the bad will he bore against them. He commanded therefore that they should be taken to Thlée Poussonne,<sup>6</sup> which is a Royal Pleasure house, one league distant from Louvo where they should be taken care of: and he had them accompanied to that place by the Mandarin, who had been second Ambassador in France, in order to make them understand that they were treated in that way for their own safety, in order that the people being irritated against the foreigners and *Sieur Constance* might not commit any excesses against them, for which the Court would afterwards be sorry.

He hesitated not in making known at once the arrest he had made, and that everyone might know of it, he had *Sieur Constance* promenaded by his side on the Palace walls, followed by the "Painted arms" whom they employ, when they wish to arrest anyone. Then he had him sent back to be fettered with five iron chains, and securely guarded in the Palace itself, where he could not be seen by anyone nor have communications with any of his friends. He underwent torture in various manners, in which according to the common rumour, and the deposition of two mandarins he was compelled to admit that he had an understanding with *Prapié*, and that he had dissipated and sent out of the Kingdom large sums of money from the Royal Warehouses. Everything which he knew about the affairs of the foreigners was extorted from him: after that he was cut into pieces. His house was pillaged, his wife and nearly all his relations were tortured cruelly in different ways to extort from them knowledge about his goods. There remained then three Mandarins of that party: *Opra Pitrachas* did not want them to escape, and he gave such good orders that without striking a blow at them they were all three put in chains on the night following the arrest of *Mr. Constance*. One of them who was in Louvo had already prepared to escape: but he was stopped on the road, and the two others in their houses, without the least alarm being caused thereby.

After having succeeded in destroying this party, which enhanced his credit and authority through the skill by which



he had so easily accomplished it, he tried now to find means to destroy the French, whom he considered as the greatest obstacles against his intentions. He had not succeeded in making the elder one of the Princes come to Louvo, who appeared even to have become suspicious owing to the prayers and often repeated solicitations of the mandarin: this also did not please the second prince and the princess who could not fail to have their suspicions aroused: this compelled Pitrachis in order that this suspicions should not take root, which might be of prejudice for him, to cease writing more about it to the elder Prince, and to take moreover in the presence of the second prince and the mandarins an oath before an idol, which was brought before him: *that he recognized and would always recognize the princes as his true masters, and that he would only act in their service.* Thereby all suspicions against him were dispelled, and this put him in a position to act more than ever. Thus although the life of the second prince and the princess was in his hands, the prince who was still in Siam might give together with the French trouble, so that he did not venture to strike the blow: and that it was which determined him to make use of the hatred, which he himself had raised against us in the heart of the princes, of the mandarins and of the people, to incite them all to combine to our ruin: he made them understand that the Kingdom would not have peace unless we were destroyed. We were told that the Princess was the first to approve of this design, of which she has since then repented.

Before resorting to open force, which Pitrachas found a little difficult to do, he wanted to use his cunning and then to conquer us by his mind, as he said: and thus he always dissimulated before the French, what he had in his heart, in order that they might easier fall into the trap, which he set for them.

A day after the arrest of Sieur Constance, he had written to the Bishop of Metellopolis and to Sieur Veret, *that as a matter of fact, certain disturbances had taken place at Louvo, and that the King has had Sieur Constance*



*arrested for a crime which he had committed against the State, but that was all and His Majesty had commanded him to inform them that he had nothing against the French nor against the Christian religion, and that they should not trouble about anything.* Two or three days after that he wrote a second letter to the Bishop and the Abbey de Lionne, in case Monsieur de Metellopolis should be unwell. The Abbey de Lionne having gone up had heard with astonishment, that all Frenchmen, who were at Louvo had been arrested, and that all other Christians, Siamese Peguans Portuguese and others were very badly treated in the jails and that when the Siamese Mandarin who had been first Ambassador in France paid him a visit a few days after his arrival he expressed to him his astonishment and asked for reasons: this mandarin who was one of the most devoted partisans of Opra Pitrachas and who had been made Barcalon for the services he had rendered in all matters, attributed everything which was done against the Christians to the hatred of the population and assured him that he would release them all: but with regard to the French, they were only treated so on account of the consideration which the Court had for their persons, and that they should not be liable to be insulted. He released in fact on the spot all prisoners, and when soon afterwards the Abbé de Lionne went to the Palace, the great Mandarin received him very well in the middle of the magnificent Court; where other Mandarins were nearly all prostrated before him; but after many compliments, he declared that it was the intention of the King that I should proceed to Louvo: that in truth the King did not blame me for having returned to Siam, in consequence of the bad rumours which were current, that he also knew that since that time I could not have come on account of an illness, from which I had been suffering which had also induced him to send me his doctors to show his esteem and consideration he had for my person: but now that he knew that I was well that I should no longer delay to obey the orders of the King who sent me for that purpose the two Mandarins who had been Ambassadors in France<sup>7</sup> in order to honour me, and to show



to all the world how much he esteemed me, and how great a friend I was: adding afterwards that if I would not go up, I would give by my refusal a just suspicion of an enterprise against the State, and that regrettable incidents might happen: whilst everything would go well if I would proceed: that he believed that I would make no more difficulties and that he would whilst waiting for me always retain the Chevalier my son. The first ambassador added in another visit which he paid to the Abbe de Lionne, that the King has had arrested *Sieur Constance* for some crime, and also because he did not satisfy the foreigners, and that he had the intention of placing my eldest son in his place, and that for that reason it was necessary I should remain for some time with him in Louvo, in order to initiate him into the affairs, that this was one of the principal reasons why I was asked to come up.

But whatever means they adopted, it was evident that matters did not proceed smoothly and I admit that I hesitated very much what action I should take with regard to the propositions made to be by the Ambassadors who had been in France. I should have wished that they had been content with the refusal I made on behalf of my son for the offer which was made to him: but they insisted absolutely that I should come up and the Abbe de Lionne whom the Mandarin had compelled to accompany them, also urged me to do so in view of the state in which matters were. On the one hand I saw well the danger in which I placed myself in their hands; on the other hand I could not refuse to go up without breaking off everything and we were not at all in a position to sustain a siege being without provisions, without any fortifications in the Place, which was moreover open on all sides.

After having taken everything into consideration I thought it was both due to my honour and my duty to expose myself and my two children to all dangers: trying by this mark of confidence to remove all suspicions and to keep the troops, which appeared impossible by all other means. I found moreover that in thus exposing myself I had two



advantages: the first to show to the whole earth the good faith of the French, which might perhaps have been a little suspected by my refusal to go up: the second to gain always some time, in which to get provisions, prepare the guns, erect pallisades, and to put the place generally in a less dangerous position. I therefore summoned Monsieur de Verdesal who was in charge after me, and I gave him all necessary orders for the public good, adding in the presence of the officers, that I knew well the danger to which I exposed myself in going up: but also that in refusing to go up, the danger which would follow my refusal was both more general and more certain; that I recommended him to do his duty well in my absence, and that he should rather see me and my children hanged, if things would come to such a pass, than to surrender the place which I entrusted to him until my return.

Opra Pitrachas having learnt my intention, sent me a beautiful litter to be carried more comfortable, and other convenient vehicles for those who accompanied me. I met at the gate of Louvo a mandarin who saluted me on behalf of the King and invited me to go straight to the Palace. This appeared to be a bad omen and led me to believe that I was to be arrested. I passed through several courts filled with armed men, and was at first very well received by the Grand Mandarin, (this is how Pitrachas has had himself called at that time) in the hall, where he gave his audiences, but after some compliments about the honour which the King my master has bestowed on me on account of my merit, about the love of the Siamese, which he said I had entirely gained, he asked me in a conversational way, *if I was truly the Master of the officers and soldiers who were at Bangkok and whether any one dared to disobey me*. I answered him without knowing at what he was driving, that discipline on this point, was very exactly observed in the armies of the King my master, and that it was necessary that all should obey the very first word of a commander.

*Very well,* he said, *I am satisfied. The King has sent you orders to come up with your troops: why then have you come up alone with your son?* I was much astonished



at such a proposition, and more so when the first Ambassador, whom I believed would bear witness, that he left me at liberty to go up alone or with as many people as I chose, stated on the contrary that he had urged me to come up with my whole garrison. I knew then that it was a preconceived game and I had scarcely any hope to get out of this bad scrape. Very well, said the Mandarin: *it was a misunderstanding: it is only necessary that you write at once to all your officers and soldiers to join you. You have assured me that not one would dare to disobey you.* I answered without taking into consideration the danger in which I was, that if I would be in the Place, it would be done as I said: but that a Commander out of the place had according to our customs not the right to give any commands: and that before leaving it, I had asked the first Ambassador to inform me whether the king had any orders to give me, so that I might have then executed before my departure: and that certainly Mr. de Verdesal would not obey any of my orders unless I was present. The Abbé de Lionne who had accompanied me, and who saw the danger in which we were, approached the first Ambassador, and told him that everything was lost if I was retained: that Monsieur de Verdesal, was a man who would not listen to anything, and would carry things to the utmost. I believe that this had the effect of changing their minds: they believed it was more expedient to send me back, in keeping my two children as hostages, for the promise they had exacted from me, that I should bring up all troops with exception of the sick ones, imagining that I would not fail to do so, as they were the Masters of the life of my two children. They proposed then to me an fictitious war which they said they had with the Accas and that as I had come for the service of the King of Siam, they would give to all Frenchmen an opportunity of gaining glory, that they would join some of their troops, and that they would give to me as a very experienced man the command of the whole army: but in order to be in a better position to beat the enemies it was necessary to write to Monsieur de Bruan to join me with his troops at a place they would indicate.



It could easily be seen to what this would lead : but it was difficult to find means to avoid it. I had proposed to them, that if they had any suspicion against us, I would beg the King to give us ships to be able to retire from the Kingdom and thus to deprive them of all umbrage : but no other answer was vouchsafed to my proposition than that it was necessary to commence by calling up all troops, and that afterwards one might give us the boats we asked for, if we would not prefer to render previously against the enemies of the State, the services which the King had asked from us. Afterwards they sent me the draft of a letter which I ought to write to Mr. de Bruan, which had been drafted by Pitrachas himself in Siamese, which being translated word by word into French, would make nonsense, and this would show to Mr. de Bruan that I was arrested and that our affairs were in a bad state : and thus I was induced to accept and write it with all their Siamese manners, with which the great Mandarin was satisfied however clever he was, but he was not acquainted with our manners, and imagined that what he had written in a good Siamese style would also make good French.

I then heard at Louvo, to increase our trouble, a bad turn which the affair of our French who had been retained, had taken and who after the departure of Monsieur l'Abbé de Lionne and the Siamese Mandarins, being afraid that I would not proceed to Louvo, had decided to do their utmost to reach Bangkok. They took for that purpose horses at Louvo, went with all possible speed 5 or 6 leagues from that place, seized a boat, and some Siamese to row it, and overpowered three or four body guards, until they arrived in the neighbourhood of Siam where they found themselves surrounded by nearly eight hundred men, who had come together to arrest them. Some mandarins approached them and gave them their word that nothing would be done to them, if they would give up their arms, and that the Great mandarin had only sent after them to bring them back to Louvo, not knowing the cause of their flight. This induced them not to defend themselves, seeing moreover that they would be defeated : but the Siamese seeing this, treated



them in the most ignoble and cruel way possible, stripping them putting ropes round their necks, and taking them back to Louvo, attached to the tails of their horses, which they frequently caused to run, without respect for my own son the Chevalier who was one of their number, beating them with sticks and partisans in order to compel those who had fallen down after such a treatment again rise : one of them died in this way on the road. They had them afterwards exposed at Louvo to a multitude of idlers for three hours : and these fellows spit in their faces, and did all imaginable outrages to them.

This story, of which I had heard somewhat vague rumours in coming up to Siam, made me judge about the very bad state of our affairs from this extreme hatred which animated their people against us. I did then my utmost to hasten my return to Bangkok, and was compelled to sacrifice my two children whom I was constrained to leave as hostages in order to proceed as the more quickly, where I believed my presence was more necessary for the honour of the King and the public weal.

I met on the road the Bishop of Metellopolis, whom the great mandarin had compelled to proceed to Louvo under the pretext that the King wanted to confer with him on important affairs. His intention was to get hold of the Bishop's person, in order to send him to Bangkok, some time after me, so that if, in spite of all the reasons which he had advanced, and the hostages whom I had left with him, I failed to decide as he wished he could threaten me with the lamentable consequences which would follow my refusal. For he told him already at the first audience quite distinctly, *that he believed, indeed, that I would come up with the troops: but that he intended sending him after me to explain, that if I did not come up he would attach to the cannons mouth himself, his Missionaries the Fathers and all Christians; but that on the contrary all would go well if I would come up.*

This precaution was nevertheless useless to him. We took our decision on Whitsunday, immediately after I had



arrived in the fortress of Bangkok. Having explained the true state of affairs to all the officers, and the bad treatment which our people had undergone, as well as the other current rumours, we decided unanimously rather to die than to fall into the hands of these barbarians.

We took therefore all precautions to put ourselves in a defensive position, working at the gun-carriages, erecting palisades and putting guns at the places most necessary. I intended to send some one on board a Chinese vessel belonging to the King of Siam which was passing before the fortress, to see whether they had any provisions for sale : but having only received an outrageous and impertinent answer I ordered to fire at it some gunshots, which prevented the vessel from proceeding on its annual voyage.

On the evening of the same day I gave orders to abandon a fort, which was on the other side of the river, as it was impossible for us to keep it, and I commanded the officer who was in charge, to set aside what we were going to keep, all the ammunition which was there, and to demolish all the merlons of the embrasures, to explode all guns, and to spike those which would not explode. There were 18 pieces pretty well made which exploded, and the rest were spiked. There was a large 110 pounder which would not burst, although all pains had been taken. The Siamese, however, were not slow in unspiking them, having a particular aptitude for this work and they put them in position. We then burnt a village which was near to our fortifications, and seeing two or three days afterwards that the Siamese were working at the fort which we had abandoned, and only seeing a very small number of them I sent a Captain, a Lieutenant and an ensign with thirty men in two boats to try to dislodge them and to see that the fort was so well destroyed, that they could not use it any longer. But scarcely had his detachment arrived in the middle of the river, when they found that this fort, and a large wall which joined it, were full of armed men. Our people would nevertheless not return without doing some damage, although they saw that the chances were not equal. They



landed and were exposed to the fire of the army, and six of them mounted on the fort, when after having killed six Siamese they retired owing to the number. Not a single Frenchman was left within the fort nor on shore; two were killed in the boats, and two or three were wounded.

We then opened a heavy fire against this same fort, in order to prevent them from building a cavalier on which they were working, and which would have entirely uncovered the whole of our place. We had the pleasure of destroying several times all their works, which they were persistently erecting although they lost a great many people. The fire which was opened on our side did not prevent them either to load and to fire against us the guns which they had unspiked and those which they had got from Siam with the mortars and bombs, which we did not expect, and they did not cease to fire for three or four days: and thereby we stood in great fear for our magazines and other houses, which were only covered with leaves.

Not a single night passed, in which they did not raise false alarms to harass us, and thus our whole garrison was always on the alert. Every night they lit matches on the one side or the other, so as to deprive us of all means to get quiet or to surprise us at last after so many false alarms. It would be difficult to describe the extremity of the fatigues which we had to undergo both by the frequent alarms, and by the work which was nearly continuous and by the want of food, and in the way which the mosquitoes attacked us, which is certainly very cruel. Then also rains were constantly falling, during which we had to fear surprises: for the firearms would have been useless and one could not have distinguished a Siamese at the distance of a space.

It was at such regrettable time that three Siamese soldiers entered our camp, who by different charms with which they adorned their bodies believed themselves to be invulnerable, and who had undertaken to burn our houses and our magazines, One of our sentinels was wounded by



them without seeing them. They were, however, shown that our arms had more power than their charms. One died on the spot, The second one died in the ditch, and the third one was able to undeceive those who believed in those charms. We remained thus the first ten or twelve days without being able to have the slightest news of what occurred and in the belief that all Frenchmen had been attacked and perhaps also the other Christians, hoping only to defend us well and to prevent that we should fall alive into the hands of this cruel nation: for we could not receive help from outside, nor could we retire, nor could we get terms from the enemy.

Under these circumstances we resolved to risk a small bark belonging to the Company, which had put into port in Bangkok. I sent it under the Command of the *Sieur de St. Crick*, lieutenant, with nine soldiers, with a view of trying to get out of the river, and to find out whether they were any means to find out two Siamese vessels manned by Frenchmen, which had been sent out two months ago to look out for pirates. The difficulty and danger in going down the river was very apparent, but in desperate affairs like ours one had to risk a great deal. This bark, after being fired at by some cannon shots from the fort of the enemy, went out of our sight, and afterwards it was so vigorously attacked that our people could not prevent it being boarded. *Sieur de St. Crick* was a man of extraordinary piety but his virtue did not in the least diminish his courage, and he in order to defend himself did all that a gallant officer could do, and finally set fire to a quantity of powder and to all the grenades which he had spread about on board, to disperse the crowd which was surrounding him. The boat having run aground and a great number of galleys having surrounded it, so that there was no hope to get out of the difficulty, *Sieur de St. Crick*, having offered some prayers, shut them all up in the chamber. When the boat was filled with Siamese, who came on board from all sides, and when he saw that more would come on board, and that they were delighted with their pretended victory, he set fire to the powder, and thus the bark and all Siamese who were in it were blown up,



and most of them died together with him. This generous action astonished this nation more than one can say, and spread very soon all over the Kingdom.

Opra Petrachas on his part, on the news he had received from the second Ambassador, as soon as he had arrived with me in Bangkok, that I had made difficulties about going up, did not fail to send Monsieur de Metellopolis as he had proposed. But this prelate only served in Bangkok as a victim to the ire of the Siamese, who being extremely irritated at the number of their people who were killed by our men, threw themselves upon him, robbed him of all he had in his boat, took away by force his episcopal cross and ring, put a rope round his neck and threatened to expose him to our guns.

Two or three days after my arrival at Bangkok I have written a letter to the great Mandarin, in which I informed him that all the Frenchmen had learnt the infamies to which those of their nation had been subjected, and of the rumours which were current, that they were to be taken out of the fortress in order to be killed, and that consequently they were not willing to come up, and that they were all resolved to defend their lives to the utmost, if they were brought to that : that what they had done, and what they did now, was only done to defend themselves, and that they were always willing to accept vessels, and to retire in peace if they were allowed to do so. After having received my letter and after the mandarins had informed him of our firm resolution, he tried a last remedy in making my children whom he had put in chains, just as the other officers in Louvo, to write a letter to me. He drafted that letter himself for them, which was as follows : *That there was no chance for their lives, if I would not go up according to my promise, and that he had shown them mercy in having postponed their punishment and in having allowed them to write to me about the danger in which they were*". I answered them : *"that I would willingly give my life to save theirs :* but when it was question of the honour of the King and the preservation of his troops, there were no



interests which had not to be sacrificed for them, that it must be sufficient for their consolation, not to have committed any crimes, and that the King knew how to avenge, when he thought fit, all outrages to which they were subjected.

Petrachas did not wait for this answer before changing his mind. The news which reached him constantly of the manner in which we behaved, made him despair of taking us in by any one of his cunning, and he evidently regretted that he had not arrested me when I was in his hands. He also saw by the works in which we were constantly engaged that it was not easy to take us by open force. He had to fear that if he would attack us, he would lose a great many Siamese, who would be thereby disgusted, and would turn against himself the fury which he had incensed against us. He thought therefore it was less venturesome for him, and that it was easier for him at that time to try to get rid of the Princes: for he had one in his hands, and he had already sent a great mandarin called Ôpra Polotep, who was devoted to him, with a thousand soldiers, under orders to raise another thousand in the city of Siam under the pretext that they were seditious people. He had already separated several mandarins who were devoted to the Prince who was in that town, in order to send them to Bangkok, and he had under various pretexts caused the chief Mandarins, whom he did not trust, to be arrested. Thus by his acuteness he had become the Master of the City and the Palace of Siam, and had brought the Prince to such a state, that he could not resist him.

He therefore had assembled the principal mandarins who were at Louvo complaining before them about the Princes, of what he said he had heard for certain, that as thanks for the good services he had rendered to them, they had resolved to get rid of him: and asking them about their views. I can well imagine that many of them saw at what he was driving: but his power was too great for any one to venture to take umbrage at it. He took care to entice the Chief persons, in making them hope for new office and dignities: he only put at the head of the troops



and command of the Chief place those whom he believed to be entirely devoted to him. All came therefore to the conclusion, that these princes were ungrateful, and that they had to be punished. He therefore issued at once orders to arrest the one who was at Siam, and to conduct him to Louvo; then he at once sent these two to a certain pagoda near Thlée Poussone, to have them killed by beating them with sandalwood, sown up in a scarlet bag according to the Custom of the Country to get rid of the Princes of the blood.

This is how this clever politician opened for himself without intermission the road to the throne, to which he aspired, although it cannot be denied that he had great luck in being able to execute so many persons, without exciting any trouble in the Kingdom. It cannot likewise be denied, that he acted in a very clever way and as a man of a great mind, in spite of what *Sieur Constance* said of him in talking to me, "that he was *an animal*, that he was not able to bring anything to a successful conclusion". He had played a very sure game, and in the way he had done it, if he could not have got the Crown without risking too much, he could have been satisfied with the second place in the Kingdom, which he could not have failed to get under the reign of the Princes.

The old King was still alive, when he got rid of them. He died the next day, after which *Pitrachas* gave the great offices to those who had served him, raised all mandarins whom he had to humour, and even set free all those whom he had made prisoners, in order to gain their good will by acts of clemency, he relieved the people from some of their servitudes and even gave them alms in public, and although he incurred little expense thereby it made him beloved and esteemed: with the result that not the slightest sedition or revolution arrived in the Kingdom of this occasion.

With regard to the Princess, he preferred to keep her to make her his wife, than to treat her in the same way as the Princes. He endeavoured to gain her good



graces; it was believed that he reserved her for his son, but he preferred to take her himself. It is said that this Princess was greatly grieved at the death of him who was or ought to have been her husband, and that in her anger she knew no bounds against the person who was responsible for it, and she regretted that she had acted against the French: but after all she preferred living as a Queen, to dying unfortunately. The public ceremony of the marriage had not taken place at the time of our departure: but there was no doubt that that would happen.

Petrachas has no sooner tried to get rid of the Princess than he thought of means to come to an understanding with us, and to allow us to leave the Kingdom in peace. He resolved for that purpose to send me my children, as a sign of the respect he had for me: he therefore had them brought before him and after first threatening them with death to try their firmness, he said: "that he felt pity for them, and that he moreover knew my straight-forwardness and that I was not capable of breaking my word: that the troops would not obey me owing to a panic: that he gave them their lives, and that he would out of consideration for me and out of friendship for them allow them to return to me." He, however, did not make them any proposition for us.

They got the answer I had written to their letters, on the road, but it was nevertheless delivered to the Great Mandarin. They arrived at Bangkok on the day of St. John bringing great joy to the whole garrison, who believed they had died as well as all other Frenchmen who were in the hands of that nation. I had some troubles in understanding why the Great Mandarin should have acted in that way, but having learnt afterwards the arrest and the death of the Princes, I was inclined to believe that by this generous action he would open a road to make peace with us, and the two mandarins whom we questioned on that point confirmed me in my sentiments.

Since that time, fire ceased gradually from one side and the other. Different propositions for an arrangement



were made. The season, the fire set to the bark, the death of the Princes smoothed the hatred of the Siamese against us, which in the beginning was great and general, and which spread even to the women, who came of their free will to bring and prepare the food for the soldiers and others who worked at the forts, wishing thus to take part in our defeat. Nevertheless since the commencement of that war up to the time of our leaving, which was only five months afterwards, there was not a moment when we did not stand in fear and when we had not to keep the whole garrison armed, in spite of the promises and assurances given to us, and which they retracted when they were so minded. They went so far that they only spoke to us about accommodating matters in order to lead us astray and to surprise us by those means, that we could get no assurance from them. I believe the most cruel thing in the world is to be in a state as we were, to be in the necessity of treating with people in the word of whom we could not believe.

During these long and tedious negotiations, during which I found out the secret to furnish the place with provisions, the two boats manned by the French arrived, and these went with us inside the place. The officers who had been retained prisoners at Louvo were also given up to us: some other Frenchmen who were also at Louvo or at Siam found the secret to join us, and through them we learnt of the bad treatment they had undergone by the Siamese, of the persecution which the Siamese Christians, Pegnans and Portuguese, had undergone and which they still underwent in a cruel slavery: that the Seminary of the Bishop of Metellopolis had been entirely pillaged, and that they had demanded or taken by force from the Portuguese camp young Christian girls to use them as concubines: we also learnt from a missionary, who had been arrested and on whom they put a neck collar together with all other Christians of a province called Porselou (Phitsnulok), which is at the extremity of the Kingdom, that ever since the month of January they were on the point of being arrested, and since that time they were threatened with what had happened afterwards: and this shows that Pitrachas had taken



measures to do what he had since executed. We also learnt from a Frenchman, who had been made prisoner at Mergui, that M. de Bruan and the French who were under his command had suffered attacks and that for want of water, and also because of the fort being commanded by a battery which the Siamese had erected, they had retired under the fire of the enemy and had taken possession of a boat of the King of Siam.

Some time afterwards we heard the news of the arrival of a vessel of the King named the *Oriflame*, commanded by M. de l'Estrille, which remained some time in the roadstead. They were greatly troubled at not having received any news from us nor from the officers who had first gone up, and the Siamese, who know how to lie and cheat as no other nation in the world, cleverly sent them up to Siam, without passing our fortress and without telling them anything of what has happened.

If our affairs had not been on the point of being settled these officers and the boat would have run great risk, and the boat could not give us any assistance by the impossibility in which it found itself of coming up the river and of having the slightest communication with us. This shows how badly the place in which we were, was situated, and of how little advantage it was and that sooner or later we should have been obliged to abandon it.

In the meanwhile a new matter turned up, which might have broken off everything. The wife of *Sieur Constance*,<sup>8</sup> after having been cruelly tortured to make her confess where all goods of her husband were, and after having suffered several other outrages on the part of these miserable "painted arms" to whom she had been confided, as well as on the part of the son of *Pitrachas* who is now called the prince, and who fell violently in love with her, had found means to escape and to proceed to Bangkok: this became known to the Mandarins and afterwards to the King, who declared to us, that no arrangement was possible unless she was surrendered. They feared that being out of the Kingdom, she would take hold of all of the goods



which her husband had acquired there, and they would be thus lost to them. Although I was very much troubled about this matter, which was done without my knowing about it, and which came at a very inopportune time (the Siamese retaining sailors (*sic*), cables, anchors and other things which were absolutely necessary for our leaving and which I had the greatest trouble to bring together), I thought nevertheless that I could not hand her over unless I provided for her safety: I tried even to obtain from the King permission that she might leave the country, but they would not listen to my proposition, and the war might have commenced once more, and been more cruel than ever. The Sieur Veret, whom I had sent to Siam to arrange our affairs, had been already arrested, and so were also all missionaries and a Jesuit father who remained. All relations of this widow whom the Siamese had arrested, were threatened with the most cruel punishments so that the Mother wrote to me and urged me to arrange this matter. This I did by a Treaty in which the King of Siam gave his word that he would grant her and her family in all liberty of conscience, that she might marry any one whom she chose, and that she was not to be violated by anyone: and on these conditions I handed her over.

Finally after all our affairs had been broken off and settled again, the Siamese agreed to let us have three vessels, provisions and everything that was necessary to us, and two great mandarins as hostages to conduct us out of the Kingdom: and we agreed not to do any harm to their place, to leave with flying colours, with our arms and baggage: and this we did on All Souls day. It was even then said that the Siamese would certainly attack us in leaving or in going down the river: we were thus constantly on our guard, but they did nothing. They played us a small trick after we had been on the roadstead by retaining some Siamese rowing boats (*Mirous*), in which there were some of our guns, which had sunk in low water near their fort. This made us retain their mandarins, who had to take us back and whom we made responsible for all our baggage.

It is nearly incredible how great were the works they

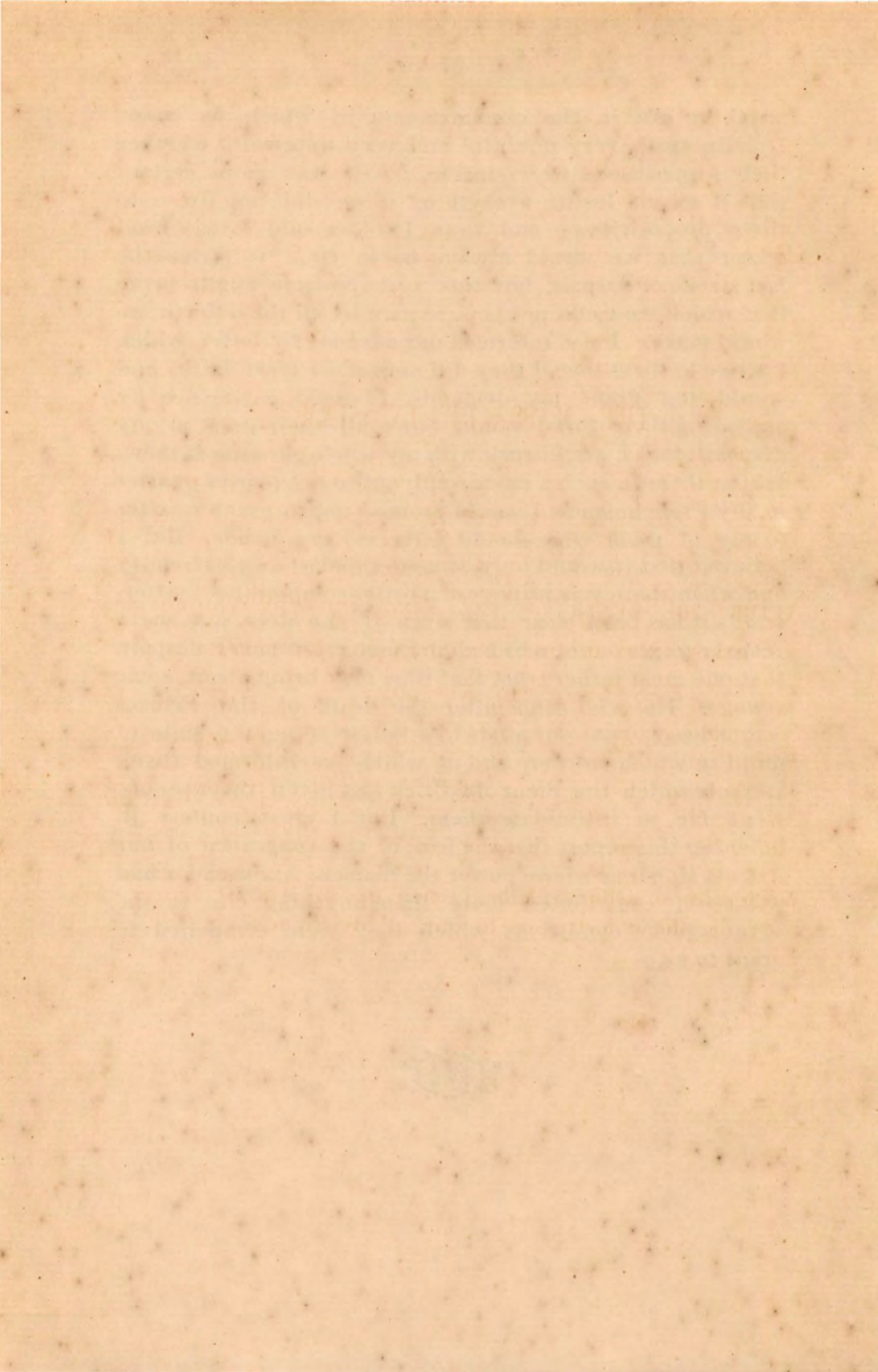


had been obliged to construct in acting against us. Besides the cavalier which they had erected at night time in spite of our guns, on the west fort, which was in their hands, they had also surrounded us with pallisades at a short distance from our cannon, and had further invested us with nine forts which they had mounted with guns, and which threatened us from behind in the whole place. They had moreover from Bangkok up to the mouth of the river erected several forts to prevent assistance coming from outside; there they had 140 pieces of guns which they had sent from Siam, and they had for that purpose opened a branch of the river, in order not to be compelled to pass before us. They had moreover with greatest trouble obstructed the bar, by which vessels could enter, with five or six rows of large and high trees planted at low tide and which were fixed so strongly that it was not possible to pass them; they had only left a small space through which to pass, which they could easily close with an iron chain, and keeping there always a large number of armed galleys to guard it. Surely one would not have thought that this people would have been able to do all this. It is true that all foreigners who were in the country had assisted them greatly against us. They had English and Portuguese on their boats as commanders and to guard the entrance of the river: Dutch to fire their bombs, and we were blockaded besides by the Siamese army and Peguans, Malays, Chinese and and others, who had each their entrenched forts. In truth it would have been easy to prevent the construction of these forts, if we had had a sufficient quantity of powder, but we would have had only sufficient for eight days, if we had kept up firing day and night, which would have been necessary to prevent them from constructing their forts. And thus they were continually working at that even after my children had been sent back to me, and during the time they made propositions for a compromise; this made me very suspicious of them. I preferred reserving the powder and gaining time, to not being able after a couple of days to repel them if they attacked us and it has been shown afterwards, that we could not do



anything else in the circumstances in which we were. It is in truth very doubtful and very uncertain whether their propositions were sincere, but it was more certain that it meant losing everything if we did not listen to their propositions: and thus I often said to the head officer that we would always be in time to strike the last stroke of despair, but that perhaps time might bring that which we could not hope to gain by all the efforts we would make. I also informed our enemies by letter which I wrote to them that if they did not act in good faith, and would not grant my demands, I would commence by exploding their forts, would burst all their guns at my disposal, that I would rush with my whole garrison at them, asking them in such a case as only grace not to give quarter to any Frenchmen as I would promise not to grant quarter to any of them who should fall into my hands. But I believed that it would only come to this last as a extremity and when there was no hope of a better compromise. Afterwards it has been clear that even if one does not see a remedy to get out of a bad affair, one must never despair, that one must rather trust that time may bring about some change. He who came after the death of the Princes commenced to put our affair in a better state; the state of mind in which we were and of which we informed them, and of which the Sieur de Crick had given them proofs, went far to intimidate them. But I must confess in finishing this report that the fear of the vengeance of our August Monarch whose power the Siamese Ambassador had witnessed contributed more than anything else to the advantageous conditions which they were compelled to grant to us.



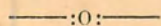




# THE MASSACRE IN SIAM,



AFTER THE DEATH OF THE KING AND THE VIGOROUS  
RESISTANCE OF THE FRENCH IN THE FORTRESSES  
OF THE KINGDOM.



Written by an Officer of the French troops who served in  
these fortresses to one of his friends.





Sir. When I left you to go to this Kingdom of Siam, I regarded as a command, which I had to fulfil to the best of my capacity, the request which you addressed to me to inform you of the progress of Christianity in this distant place. What I have related to you in my previous letters seems to have fully satisfied you, because you admit in all letters with which you have honoured me, that you did not believe that these rude people should have been enlightened in such a short time in the mysteries and truth of our Religion. I blamed you for your misbelief and attempted to persuade you to reflect a little on the conduct of our August Monarch for such a great work when you would have agreed with me that all these projects being established for the advancement of the Religion. Heaven would surely grant all necessary assistance to succeed in this enterprise. Indeed everything had been so well done, that it seemed as if the Catholic Religion in Siam would be that which at all times had governed the people of this vast Kingdom. But God, who never better manifests His glory than in making such things which appear to us impossible succeed, willed it that the enemies of Religion should foment new troubles in this country in order that our King might recommence his work at a time when he was fully occupied with the same enemies of the Religion of his state. Here is in substance how things happened.

The Dutch who are the nation who do the greatest amount of trade in Siam, seeing that the zeal of our great King was chiefly directed to establishing the faith of Jesus Christ there, and that indeed the Revd. Jesuit fathers

whom His Majesty had sent for the instruction of these idolatrous people converted every day a great number of them in making them make solemn and public abjurations, and who by this good example led one to believe that the King of Siam would lead after himself all his subjects to our creed, did not fail from the very beginning to employ all means to prevent the great progress. As during the lifetime of the King, who was clear sighted, they could not succeed in their intentions, they took advantage of the time during which the King could no longer act, and death was on the point of depriving him of life.

His Siamese Majesty having fallen dangerously ill in May 1688, one Opra Petracha a man of great merit amongst the Siamese mandarins, pushed by the Dutch to aspire to the Crown of his King, took measures to execute his intentions, which was not difficult for him. As he had refused the highest charges of the state, with which the King wanted to honour him on several occasions, with a view of simply applying himself to Religion, taking upon himself the duties of a true priest, he approached first the most distinguished amongst them, who seeing that the chief reason for this pernicious design consisted in a true zeal for the Siamese Religion assisted him at once so that he should be raised to the throne. Their blindness went so far that having had assembled a great many people to whom they communicated the resolutions which they had taken regarding the nomination of their new King, they allowed the people to go to all parts of the town proclaiming openly that Opra Petracha was the most worthy of all nobles of Siam to become their king, not taking into consideration that their party had not yet been formed and that such attempt might lead to the abortion of their designs. What induced the people to declare themselves so openly was that the majority of them had received great help from this Opra in gifts which he constantly bestowed on them. His son whom he had raised to the first dignity of the Kingdom next after the Princes of the blood, which is what they call Oya, seeing the necessity there was to do everything to the interest of his father amongst the friends and the



grandeest of the Kingdom, wrote to the one and went to visit the others in secret. He showed them all the contempt in which the King held their religion, and addressing all those of whom he knew that they had been badly treated by M. Constance, he made them see how dangerous it would be if the true successor to the Crown should be elevated to the Throne, because M. Constance would become only more powerful.

All these measures having been taken, and the illness of the King getting worse, so that there was no doubt about his death, this Opra at the head of 15,000 men whom his own devices and those of his son had attracted within a short time, occupied all entrances to the palace of the King; in which the nobles were kept. He kept them besieged for several days under the pretext that according to custom, while the King was on the point of dying, it was necessary to secure the principal mandarins, so that they could not act against the true successor.

M. Constance, knowing perfectly well the secret ambition of this Opra, neglected nothing to be in a position to scatter these rebels by force and to arrest this chief of the rebels. For that purpose he assembled all Catholics and sent an express to M. des Farges, Governor of Bangkok, commanding him to come at once to his assistance with the troops of his garrison: but M. des Farges, seeing well from the rumours he heard of a general rebellion, that he would only expose the few people he had without being able to dispel this uprising, and that the Christians had no Asylum to which to escape in case of prosecution, resolved to keep the place and sent a messenger to M. Constance asking him to take refuge himself with his family and all Catholics in Bangkok, as he believed the evil was too great. Indeed the messenger had not yet arrived in Siam, when the Usurper believed he was strong enough and, seeing that M. Constance had not sufficient forces to resist him, he lost no time and openly declared himself Sovereign. He himself had already arrested the adopted son of the King, whom he had cut into pieces with a cruelty without



example. M. Constance had been arrested at the same time with arms in his hands accompanied by several Christians fighting for the faith of Jesus Christ, and, having witnessed this spectacle, suffered the same torment as the prince.

This tyrant, whose first success increased his fury, had the brothers of the King put in velvet bags and had them knocked down with wooden clubs. He then had the house of M. Constance pillaged, where his children and all his servants were arrested and made prisoners. Madame Constance, several times urged by the son of this Usurper who was in love with her to enter amongst the number of his wives with a promise to have always for her the greatest consideration, replied that his offer would never shake her. Finally this cruel man seeing that he could do nothing with her made her the last of his slaves, and made her suffer the most cruel torments. He had her arms broken and had her thrown with her children in a building where the elephants were lodged, from which a French Officer rescued them and conducted them to Bangkok.

The populace went to the Seminary and to the Jesuit Fathers, where after having robbed them all of what they were possessed, they seized them and, treating them with great cruelty, prevented that anything should be given for their maintenance.

The King, who knew of these events and who was shut up in the palace in the hands of his enemies, asked for money from this tyrant and, after having received it, distributed 50 écus of it to each Jesuit. Then, more afflicted by seeing the French Catholics ill treated than by the illness from which he was suffering this Monarch died. The usurper had himself at once proclaimed King and, after the promise he had made for the establishment of liberty and of the Siamese Religion, he only thought of expelling the French from the country together with those who appeared in favour of the late King and of M. Constance.



We retired to the fortress of Bangkok, and we were then besieged by all nations who were living in the states of the new King. The fortress was soon surrounded by eight small forts, which the besiegers built at the distance of a cannon shot, and these all were furnished with guns and bombs which they could only have received from the Dutch and which much incommoded us, as we feared that our magazines which were all of wood should be set on fire; but we nevertheless demolished all their works with cannon shots. The vexation they had in seeing this work ruined in such a short time made them take the resolution to put at the head of their works the Bishop and the other French whom they had made prisoners in Siam, so that if we should fire those of our nation would be killed first.

Although their astuteness was successful as we did not shoot so often since we had to take good aim, and although our fortress was open on the land side we were able to resist five months and four days; after which time when we were running short of all sorts of ammunition, we were granted through the help of the Bishop a capitulation according to which the Siamese furnished us with everything necessary for our maintenance and for the transport of our baggage up to the mouth of the river where the *Oriflame* one of the King's vessels, of 50 guns, had arrived. Hostages were sent on board and after having burst part of the cannons and spiked the others we left Bangkok.

Mergui was besieged by the same nations and M. Bruan, who commanded this place, having with him only thirty men, defended himself vigorously during some time, but a cannon ball having smashed his last jar of water he took the resolution to leave the fort with his people sword in hand. He executed his design with a surprising intrepidity and having broken through the enemies he compelled the rest to run away. He arrived at the sea shore, where he found two feluccas, on which he embarked and went to Pondicheri with 20 men and some Jesuits in a pitiable state. M. des Farges arrived there some time afterwards

with his troops and sent M. Beauchamp to France on the vessel *la Normande* to give an account to his Majesty of this sad revolution, with orders to pass by the Cape of good Hope to give notice to the French vessels not to go to Siam.

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## NOTES.

1. According to the Phongsavadan King Narayana had on his accession three brothers, Phra Indraraja, Phra Traibhuvanarthadityawongse and Prince Tong.

Phra Indraraja and Phra Traibhuvanart were executed for conspiracy at the commencement of the reign. Prince Tong is not mentioned further in the annals.

2. Hehad one son Chao Fa Abhaidos, who was to succeed to the throne.

At the time of the death of King Narayana he was summoned to Lopburi; obeying this summons he arrived soon after the death of the King. He was then arrested by order of Hluang Sarasakdi, who held the position of Mahaparakaj, and was killed with sandalwood clubs at the temple of Wat Sak.

3. Phaulkon is described in the annals as a French merchant, who came with his ship to Ayuddhya. He gained the favour of the King first by teaching the getting out of the dock of a ship. By the reports he made about France, it is said that he induced the King to send an Embassy to France.

All episodes concerning him as related in the Phongsavadan must be considered in the light of fables. The Phongsavadan agrees however with foreign writers in as much as they make him responsible for the fortifications of Dhanaburi (Bangkok) and Phitsnulok. He also



advised about buildings which were erected at Lophburi. It is related that he surrounded the house which he built with brick walls and this was taken as a proof that he aspired to the Crown. He was held in his office by the King in spite of the opposition of the Chief Nobles.

About his death several versions exist. The Phong-savadan record that before the death of the King, he was summonsed to the Palace by Phra Phetraraj through his friend Phya Surasongkham. Much against his will he entered his sedan chair. When he arrived at the Palace gates he was assaulted and killed with clubs by the Palace guards under Hluang Sarasakdi.

In the second version given in the "Kham Hai Kan Khun Hluang Ha Vat" the evidence of the King of Siam otherwise known as Somdet Phra Paramarajadhiraj the 4th (1758) before the King of Burma (Alongpra), a work which in its present form does not deserve much credence, it is related that Chao Phya Vijayen made a secret passage from his house leading to the Royal Palace, in which he had inserted gunpowder with a view to blow up the palace. This became known to Chao Phya Rajawangsan and Phya Sien Kham, who informed the King of it. Phya Sien Kham was ordered to summon Chao Phya Vijayen to the palace. Phya Sien Kham, who was of Malay descent, entered the house of Chao Phya Vijayen armed with a sword and invited him to a conversation and summonsed him to the palace by order of the King. As he would not obey the summons he drew his sword and killed Chao Phya Vijayen on the spot.

Cpr. Bowring : Siam Vol. 11. 346.

In the full and true Relation of the great and wonderful Revolution, that happened in the Kingdom of Siam it is said that (Opra Petracha) "summonsed Monsieur Constance and severely reproached him, charging him with treachery and perfiduousness against the King and Government of Siam and then caused him to be put to the ordinary and

extraordinary torture, to force him to discover and declare who were his accomplices in the management of the intrigue for making the King a Christian and subjecting the Kingdom to the French Power, and when he had continued him several hours in the torture, he ordered the King's adopted Son to be brought to the palace and caused his head to be cut off immediately and a string to be run through it, and then to be hung about Monsieur Constance his neck in the manner of European cravate.

"This tragedy was acted on the 28th of May, the following 29th and 30th, Monsieur Constance was again applied to the torture in the cruellest manner that could be devised having the young prince's head always hanging on his breast night and day. Thus they continued to torment him till the 4th of June till he expired under the violence of the torture."

In the history of Constance by Le Père d'Orleans it is said that he was executed on the 5th June, 1688 at the Thlee Poussonne.

With the exception of Faulcon none of the French who took part in the Revolution are mentioned in the Phongsavadan, naturally so as the Phongsavadan is what its name Vararāja Vamsāvatāra implies chronicles of the Royal Race.

Reference to the Frenchmen implicated can be found in Lanier, *Etude Historique sur les Relations de la France et du Royaume de Siam de 1662-1703* (Extrait des *Memoirés de la Société des Sciences Morales et des Arts de Seine et Oise*, tome XIII, Année 1883; further in John Anderson, M. D., *English Intercourse with Siam in the Seventeenth Century* (Trübner's Oriental Series, London 1890).

4. The daughter of King Narayana held the title of Krom Hluang Yodhadeb. She was raised on the accession of Phra Phetraja to the rank of Queen to the left.

Phra Pié (Pīya) was the son of Khun Traisiddhi Sak, an inhabitant of Ban Kēng. He was brought up in the Royal



Palace in the same way as a Royal Prince. He was of a dwarfish appearance, and had the nick name of dwarf. He was in constant attendance on the King during the last illness. He was killed by being pushed down from the palace wall by order of Hluang Sarasakdi by one Khun Phitak Raksa, a Palace Guard.

5. Opra Petracha (*i. e.* Phra Phetraja) (Debraja). He was at the head of the Elephant Department, a resident of Ban Phlu Hluang in the district of Suphanburi. He was very skilled and was entirely in the confidence of the King, whom he accompanied on all his warlike expeditions and during the illness of the King was appointed Regent.

His son Nai Dúa (Hluang Sarasakdi). The annals relate that he was the son of King Narayana with a Laosian captive, daughter of the Prince of Chiengmai. His mother was given in marriage to Phra Phetraja. Many stories of his valour and cleverness are related of him in the annals, also that the King recognised him as his son. Both were enemies of Phaulkon. He was during the illness of the King appointed Maha-Uparaj.

6. Thlée Pousonne = Thale Chubson, a lake in the neighbourhood of Lophburi, with pleasure house.

Louvo = Lavo = Lophburi. (*See* Giblin: Lophburi past and present; vol. v. iii).

7. Ambassadors in France. The chief Ambassador sent was Nai Pān, who after his return from France, on the decease of his elder brother Lek, was made Minister for foreign affairs. (Phya Kosa). In the reign of Phra Phetraja he was, according to Kaempfer, Minister for foreign affairs and High Chancellor. About the Embassy to France Bowring, vol. ii. 445, may be compared. King Mongkut, writing to Sir John Bowring, asks him to procure a book relating to the visit of the Siamese Embassy to France, in return of the French one to Siam, of which it is said *one of our ancestors has been head*.

"There is a statement written here of that Embassy on its return from France. All these statements an unsatisfac-

tory, difficult to believe and much exaggerated. They are opposed to geographical knowledge, and it would appear that at that time no one could have thought that any Siamese would have seen France again."

For the French account of the Siamese Embassy see this Journal, ii. 63.

8. A great deal of romancing is connected with the story of the wife of Faulcon. She is of course not mentioned in the Phongsavadan. Turpin, quoting from Tachard and Père d'Orléans, makes her a somewhat melodramatic heroine. Père d'Orléans describes her as Japanese, "celebrated by the nobility of her family and still more by the pure blood of the martyrs from which she had the honour to be descended, and whose virtues she knew so well to imitate." Deslandes, quoted by Lanier, gives her name as Doña Guyomar de Piña, of Portuguese origin. That she later on was employed in the King's kitchen under Phra Phetrāja we have no reason to doubt.

Kaempfer gives a tale differing somewhat from that of the French writers just quoted. He says, recording the death of Faulcon, "He was first carried to his home which he found rifled, his wife lay prisoner in the stable who far from taking leave of him spit in his face and would not so much as suffer him to kiss his only remaining son of four years of age, another son being lately dead and still unburied."

