SIAM, an extensive kingdom of India beyond the Gan­ges, situated principally between the 10th and 15th degrees of north latitude, in the heart of the great peninsula be­tween India and China. It is bounded on the north by un­known tracts, that extend as far as Thibet and China ; on the south it has the Gulf of Siam and the Malay peninsula ; on the east it has ranges of mountains, by which it is sepa­rated from Cambodia and Cochin China ; andon the west it is bounded by the Burmese dominions. The extent of this kingdom, like many others in the east, appears to have varied with the success of its arms. It formerly was estimated to extend in length three hundred and sixty miles, by three hundred in average breadth ; but it has since been con­tracted by the encroachments of the Burmese within nar­rower limits. It may be considered as consisting of the extensive valley through which the great river Menan flows, on the banks of which all the principal towns are si­tuated ; and it possesses besides a great extent of sea-coast along the Gulf of Siam, which is but thinly inhabited, as the Siamese have an aversion to settle on the sea-coast, from their dread of the Malay pirates. The valley of the Menan is subject to be inundated during the rainy season by the periodical floods of that river, the artificial sites of the villages and the trees being the only objects that rise above the expanse of the waters. It is only this part of the country which is known to Europeans ; and it is an exten­sive flat, consisting of alluvial land, with many extensive morasses, from which the exhalations under a tropical sun are noxious to Europeans, causing fluxes, dysenteries, and acute fevers. In those tracts which are beyond the reach of the inundations, the country is parched and dried up.

The country is described by those who composed the British embassy which accompanied Mr. Crawfurd to Siam in 1822, as rich and fertile in a high degree, and possessing extensive commercial resources. This is almost entirely owing to the peculiar fertility of the soil, very little of the merit being due to native industry, except in the formation of canals. It is to the overflowing of the river Menan and its numerous tributaries, that this fertility is owing. The country yields the most abundant crops of rice and of other plants, which require a redundant supply of moisture. Wheat is also reared on the higher grounds, but not in any great quantity, so that it requires to be imported for the use of the Europeans who reside here. All the richer pro­ductions of the tropical climates would also thrive in the same place; but there is little industry amongst the people, who are depressed by the tyranny of their rulers, and have no encour­agement to cultivate the country. There is no country in the world where all sorts of fruits, the most luscious and exqui­site, arrive at greater perfection. The pine-apple, the ta­marind, and the banana, abound in Siam. Of the mangoes, there are not less than thirty species, all excellent ; and so is also the coffee plant. The sugar cane grows to perfection, though only for home consumption ; for the rude natives do not possess the art of refining it. The areka and the betel-nut are produced ; the latter is exported in consider­able quantities by the Portuguese in their ships, and also in Chinese junks. Pepper, on the other hand, is not reared to nearly the same extent as in Java. The cocoa-nut is a great resource to the indolent Siamese. It is applied to nu­merous uses ; its milk seasons many of the dishes, and the oil affords an excellent seasoning ; it is also used for torches, and as a kind of pitch, which, when clarified, is well adapt­ed for painting. Here are, besides, many medicinal plants and gums, and also oil of jessamine, benzoin, lack, crystal, emery, antimony, oil, wax, lack varnish, wild cinnamon, cassia buds, and iron wood, the lost of which is much used by the natives as anchors for their vessels. Cotton grows abundantly, and is as fine as silk ; “ but,” says a European visitor to this country, “ these wretches do not know how to value it beyond stuffing beds and pillows.”

Siam abounds in all the wild animals known in the tro­pical countries, which find ample cover in the deep forests of the interior. The elephant ranges in the outskirts of the kingdom, amongst the mountains and jungles which form its eastern and its western boundary. The hunting of this animal is a royal monopoly ; a great number are taken every year, the finest of which are selected for the studs of the king and nobles, and the rest are exported to other parts of India. The white elephant is found in some parts ; it is a very rare animal, and is so prized, that it has occasioned wars between sovereign states. The rhinoceros also fre­quents the forests, whose skin is much sought after as an object of trade. He is a dangerous animal when enraged, and is not easily overcome, as his skin is so hard that it can hardly be penetrated by a musket ball. But one of the most numerous and most dangerous animals found in the woods is the tiger, which grows to a large size, and is remarkably fierce in the interior regions of Siam. The monkey race are in vast variety, and spread over the cultivated fields, which they speedily lay waste. There are numerous other wild animals, namely, lizards of various kinds, cameleons, tortoises, hedgehogs, and a species of porcupine, which yields valuable bezoar.

The domestic animals are horses, cows, buffaloes, sheep, goats, and elephants. There is abundance of common poultry ; and besides, peacocks, pigeons, partridges, snipes, parrots, and other birds. The horses are very inferior, the best being imported from Batavia ; and the same may be said of all domestic animals except the hog, the flesh of which' is superior to the same animal in Europe. In­sects and vermin abound here as in other parts of India ; and the sea and rivers yield abundance of excellent fish, on which a great proportion of the lower classes subsist. There are besides lobsters and turtle of a good quality, and the manjo fish, which is so much esteemed in Calcutta.

The mineral riches of Siam are but little known. It is inferred that gold must exist in the mountains, as it is col­lected in small quantities in the streams, by which it is washed down. Iron, tin, lead, and copper, are likewise pro­cured, but in small quantities. The copper is of a good quality. Iron is imported in considerable quantities from Europe, no diligence being employed to procure it in the country. The mountains in the interior yield diamonds equal to those in Hindustan, also sapphires, rubies, and agates.

Tire Siamese, from the fertility of their soil, and the fa­cilities of internal traffic afforded by the numerous streams and canals which everywhere intersect the country, are less dependent than most other nations on foreign trade. They are supplied chiefly by the Chinese, who, from their simi­larity of character and other causes, are the only people per­mitted to trade freely here. The Chinese commerce with Siam is said to be very extensive, and to employ no less than from 30,000 to 40,000 tons of shipping annually in the port of Bankok alone. It is to the supple character of the Chinese, the long connexion that has subsisted between the two countries, and the number of that nation resident in Siam, that this great trade is to be ascribed. The articles which chiefly attract the Chinese traders, are sugar, sapan wood, of which 18,000 tons are exported annually, pepper, cardamoms,sharks fins, birds’nests, bechedemer, hides, about 200,000 of which are exported annually ; bones of the ele­phant, the rhinoceros, the tiger, the dcer, and the buffalo; indigo, cotton, wines, and a variety of smaller articles. The Chinese traders, in their junks, arrive every year in Febru­ary, March, and April, from Hainan, Canton, Soukah, Amoy, Ningpo, and other places. They take away, besides the above articles, a considerable quantity of culmin. There are annually about eighty vessels, mostly freighted by Chi­nese settlers at Bankok, or Siamese nobles, some of whom engage in traffic. Rice and salt of the very best quality are exported to all the European settlements to the eastward.