



INDO-CHINA AND EAST INDIES: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC.

INDO-CHINA.

THIS area, excluding the Malay Peninsula, consists of the following natural regions: (1) The northern highlands and a series of ranges which separate the valleys of the Songkoi, Mekong, Menam, Salwin, and Irawadi; (2) the lower valleys of these rivers, their deltas, and the coastal plains. On account of their fertility these lowlands support most of the inhabitants of the area; and since communication between them is difficult, they have generally formed separate political units. Those in the east now belong to France, and those in the west to Britain, while the central portion constitutes the independent kingdom of Siam.

The Northern Highlands.—These mountains and the gorges between them are clad with forests, which are not yet fully explored, and form the home of such wild animals as elephants, bears, rhinoceros, buffaloes, and monkeys. The elephants are captured and used as beasts of burden, especially in hauling timber to the rivers, down which it can be floated for export. The most valuable timber is teak, for which Burma is noted. Various useful products are obtained from the forests, as cutch, a preparation from the juice of a tree that is used in tanning and dyeing.