
A journey through the Chinese empire

Huc Evariste Régis

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Author: Huc Evariste Régis

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A JOURNEY THROUGH

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M. Huc

THE CHINESE EMPIRE.

BY M. HUC,

AUTHOR OF

"RECOLLECTIONS OF A JOURNEY THROUGH TARTARY
AND THIBET."

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It is common to say that health is the greatest blessing possessed by man here below; and in fact the enjoyments of this life are so fragile and fugitive, that they all vanish at the approach of the slightest infirmity. But for the exile, for the traveler, wandering in distant lands, health is not merely a good—it is a quite inestimable treasure—for it is a mournful and bitter thing to be attacked by illness in a foreign country, far from relations or friends, and surrounded by persons to whom you are a source of annoyance, and who only regard you with indifference, or even with aversion. What a frightful and desperate situation would it be for

one who counted only on the help of man, and had the misfortune of not knowing how to find in God his support and consolation.

Our long journey—so full of vicissitudes of every kind—had hitherto been at least free from this trial. In Tartary and Thibet we had been threatened with being starved or frozen to death, devoured by wild beasts, murdered by robbers, or crushed by the fall of avalanches; a single step would often have been sufficient to plunge us from the top of a mountain into a frightful abyss.

In China, executioners had displayed before us the instruments of their atrocious tortures; an angry populace had risen in insurrection around us; and, finally, a tempest had nearly engulfed us in the waters. After having so often had death under various forms so near us, it only remained to see him standing quietly at our bed-foot, ready to take possession in the most ordinary forms of a prey that had so often escaped him, and for two whole days it pleased God to leave before our eyes this melancholy vision.

On the very evening of our arrival at *Kuen-kiang-hien*, and while we were receiving the visit of the principal magistrates of the town, we were suddenly seized with violent vomitings, accompanied by most acute pains in the stomach. It seemed really as if a general decomposition were going on in our frame, from head to foot; and we were forced to go to bed. The doctor was sent for; the most renowned doctor, it was said, of the whole country; a man accustomed to perform prodigies, and cure with the greatest ease all sorts of incurable maladies. While waiting the arrival of this marvelous doctor, in whom we were far from feeling the most absolute confidence, the Mandarins of our escort, and those of *Kuen-kiang-hien*, discoursed with much learning and