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VOYAGE

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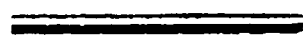
FRANCE TO COCHIN-CHINA,

IN THE

SHIP HENRY,

CAPTAIN REY, OF BORDEAUX,

IN THE YEARS 1819 AND 1820.



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China, to compute astronomical tables, said to be extremely accurate.

The month of September, when the alteration of the monsoon takes place, was now at hand; after which it is very difficult for shipping to go down the river Hué. Every preparation was therefore made for our departure, the day before which, the 25th of August, the festival of our good king Louis XVIII. was celebrated by an entertainment on-board the *Henry*, at which were present not only all our countrymen in the capital, but also the mandarins of our acquaintance, and (which was still more remarkable) their ladies. One of the toasts drunk by all the guests was *moun, moun thoé boua-Falanca, boua-Anam*; that is to say, "a long reign to the kings of France and Anam."

The country of Cochin-China, just emerging from the disorders and devastations of civil dissention and warfare, possessed but little ground in cultivation; for exportation, therefore, it furnished little else than rice, tobacco, and arca; the Chinese carried off also cargoes of sugar, when arca was not to be procured. The soil of the country is naturally very fertile, and, with little labour, produces plentifully whatever is required. It affords likewise the commodities of the Philippine islands and of Bengal. Chinese goods may also be obtained in Cochin-China cheaper than at Canton itself; being carried thither by Chinese junks, which are not subject to the same heavy duties with foreign vessels.

The Cochin-Chinese are naturally mild, affable, polite, and intelligent. The lower classes are superior to those of China, and even to those of Europe, in respect of morals and goodness of disposition. Polygamy is general in the country; but one wife alone is always mistress of the house, and the others are her servants; nor do the children of these last inherit the property of the father, who provides for them in his life-time. Divorce is also practised by mutual consent, and the children are divided between the parents. Polygamy and divorce are the chief obstacles which the missionaries have to surmount, in the propagation of the Christian religion in the country. Conjugal infidelity is punished with the death of both the offenders.

The ladies of the middling and higher classes of Cochin-China are very reserved, and sometimes handsome, particularly in the northern provinces, where, the climate being the most temperate, their complexion is fairer than in the southern parts. They are all, however, (unfortunately as we Europeans think) addicted to the use of betel and arca, mixed with the lime of shells, which reddens the mouth as if it bled. The dress of the men is composed of long and wide pantaloons,

paper. These were monuments of the gratitude of porters employed in carrying heavy burthens across the mountain, in consequence of vows to the guardian spirits of the place, who had assisted them in accomplishing their task. Halting to take some refreshment in the guard-house on the summit, we there enjoyed a magnificent view of the bay of Tourane under our feet, where our ships looked like walnut-shells.

Resting for an hour and a-half we began to descend, advancing at times faster than we intended; and the road being much obstructed by rocks and stones, we were more fatigued in going down than we had been in going up. At five o'clock we arrived at the guard-house on the sea-shore, where our dinner was ready prepared. When the sun began to disappear behind the hills, we began to shoot the peacocks which are there very numerous. We fell in with very recent tracks of tigers; and we learned from the people of a neighbouring village, that for some time past those animals frequently appeared in that quarter. Snares had been set for them, and three had been sent to the emperor. Fortunately we received this information; otherwise our surgeon would have been caught in a tiger-trap, being drawn towards it by the barking of a dog placed in it to inveigle the tigers. In constructing this trap a double hut is erected, open on all sides, having one entrance closed by a swing-gate, which shuts of itself from within. When the tiger hears the barking of the dog he enters the outer hut, and the gate closes behind him: but he finds the dog in the centre to be still cut off from him by an inner inclosure. The dog trained for this business keeps up a continual noise, until the tiger be within the trap, and then holds his tongue: then the people assemble to kill or secure the ferocious intruder. The tiger of Cochin-China is of the same kind with the royal tiger of Bengal. The forests shelter many different animals, in particular the wild bull, the object of grand hunting parties for the court. Deer, white-horned goats, the rhinoceros, wild-boar, and the elephant, are also very numerous: but the most formidable of all is the tiger, which attacks both man and beast. The only animal he fears, it is said, is the rhinoceros; and in the battles between them, sometimes exhibited in the capital, the rhinoceros is almost always the conqueror. Once a-year a general tiger-hunt takes place, in which more men are killed and wounded, as I was told, than in some of their late battles. The emperor maintains a large body of elephants, to be employed in these hunts as well as in war. Our peacock-shooting was not very successful, for we killed but one; and next morning renewing our operations, we fell in with very fresh marks of tigers: