



The Yangtze Valley and Beyond: An Account of Journeys in China, Chiefly in the Province of Sze Chuan and Among the Man-tze of the Somo Territory

Isabella Lucy Bird

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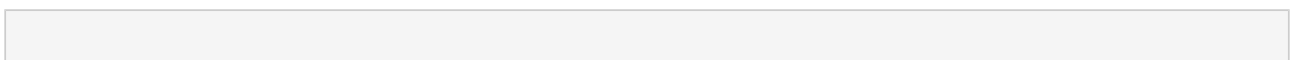
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Isabella Lucy Bird married name Bishop (1831 – 1904) was a nineteenth-century English explorer, writer, photographer and naturalist. THIS is Mrs. Bird Bishop's fifteenth (or thereabouts) narrative of travel and adventure. There are no new worlds left for her pen to conquer, and few unbeaten paths for her feet to follow. But her feet are unwearied and her pen as clever as ever. The Valley of the mighty Yangtze, the vast regions beyond far in the interior, and the general situation in China at the that time, afford her, however, a comparatively fresh field for exploration, observation, and instructive and entertaining report. Out of the journal letters, diary notes, and photographs produced in the course of fifteen months' wanderings in China, eight of which were spent on the Yangtze, she has made up a readable readable volume of nearly 800 pages in all, and their date is as late as 1897. Much of this ground is new to the traveler, and over not a little of it, by the route she followed, she was a pioneer among European women. She voyaged over the inland waters in good part in a native house-boat, attended with no companion of her own kind, with a single Chinese servant, and face to face with sights, sounds, smells, and experiences which to some senses and sensibilities would seem formidable indeed. But Mrs. Bishop fears nothing, shrinks from nothing, loses nothing. Not the novelties of life on the house-boat, not the perils of navigating the rapids of the Yangtze, not the discomforts of Chinese domesticity, not the scowls or frowns of surrounding throngs in swarming towns where the face of the European is unknown, deter her from her quest of the new and the strange. Though long since Mrs. Bishop, she is the same Miss Bird with whom we have had delightful and profitable companionship in Japan, in Korea, in the Rockies, and in Fiji, and it is good to be with her again in one of the most interesting quarters of the globe, in the very innermost life of one of the most attractive peoples of the earth, in the midst of movements, events, conditions, and possibilities which may bring forth at any time extraordinary happenings, and in which unquestionably lie wrapped up vast changes affecting the estate of four hundred millions of human beings. After trying her wings, so to speak, in the regions round about Shanghai, Mrs. Bishop ascended the Yangtze to Hankow and Wuchang, first stage; threaded her exciting, romantic, dangerous, fascinating way through the great Yangtze Gorges, second stage; and then, for her third and crowning achievement, made a vast circuit through the province of Sze Chuan, a nation by itself, with its population nearly equal to that of the United States. Those who have been troubled by her chapter on foreign missions, will find an ample refutation of its arguments, and a sufficient defense of Christian missionaries and their work.

During her journeys in the Yangtze Region, Mrs. Bishop followed the Yangtze River down-stream from its furthest navigable limits, at Chengtu, to its mouth, a distance of over 2,000 miles; and up-stream, from Shanghai to Wan Hsien, for about 1,200 miles, thus both descending and ascending the great rapids above Ichang, which are the chief impediments to steam-navigation on the Upper Yangtze.

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