



Prutky's Travels to Ethiopia and Other Countries (Hakluyt Society, Second Series)

Remedius Prutky

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Remedius Prutky, Franciscan missionary, was in 1751 appointed vice-prefect of a mission sent to Ethiopia in response to an invitation by the then emperor Iyasu II; with two colleagues he left Cairo in August and reached Massawa in November. After some delay he was summoned to Gondar, which he reached in March, and, largely by his expertise in medicine, began to make friends among the court and clergy. But the Coptic archbishop at Gondar soon prevailed upon the weak Emperor to expel the missionaries, who thus spent only nine months at Gondar, and seventeen months in the country altogether. From Massawa, the missionaries went to Mocha, and thence by courtesy of a French ship to Pondicherry, where Dupleix the governor sent them in October 1752 to L'Orient in France. From there they returned to Rome by way of the Canal du Midi and Marseilles. From Rome Prutky recounts his journey to his home in Bohemia, his interview with Maria Theresa and her consort, and his journey back to Egypt via Leghorn. He then tells of his voyage back to Rome from Alexandria through the Archipelago. The Ethiopian adventure forms the bulk of the whole, and in view of the scarcity of information about that country, is the under-lying reason for translating the book. But Prutky's account of Mocha, and of the European trading factories there, as well as his description of India and Ceylon as seen during six weeks in Pondicherry, is of no small interest, as is his account of Dupleix' recently completed palace, destroyed in 1761. Both his voyage from Mocha to Pondicherry and his much longer voyage from Pondicherry to France are given added interest by the inclusion of the daily ship's log. The book ends with a sad account, not written by Prutky, of his final task as Prefect of the mission in St Petersburg from 1766 to 1769, ending with his expulsion from Russia by Catherine the Great and his death in Florence immediately afterwards.

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