

Recollections of Napoleon at Saint Helena.

By Mrs Abell. Murray 1844.

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The Emperor expressed much curiosity to be introduced to a Mr Manning who had arrived at St. Helena on his voyage to England from China, which country he had visited after exploring the unknown, & at that time, untravelled Kingdom of Thibet. Napoleon said he had a great curiosity to hear something relating to their mode of worshipping the Grand Lama, & as he was induced to believe most of the accounts he had read & heard of it were fabulous. - I described the impression Mr Manning had made on me by his imposing appearance: his dress was like that of a Mandarin, & he wore a long black beard which reached to his waist. He had, during the war, been a prisoner in France, & had been treated with great clemency by Napoleon: thus was each party anxious to see the other. Mr Manning had brought many very curious presents for Napoleon, which he had collected in his travels. He obtained a pass to see the Emperor: he said he had been presented to the Lama, who was a very intelligent boy of seven years old: that he had gone through the same forms as the other worshippers who were admitted to the celestial presence. Napoleon asked him if he were not afraid of being seized as a spy. The traveller did not seem pleased that the Emperor should have thought that his appearance conveyed such an impression: but he laughingly pointed to his beard & dress, & seemed much diverted with his interview. He could not think how they, jealous as they were in their religious rites, should have admitted an unbeliever into their sacred temple, & have permitted him to approach the Lama. Mr Manning said

he honoured + respected all religions, as did Napoleon. The Emperor wished to know if he had passed for an Englishman, as the shape of his nose was too good for a Tartar. Mr. Manning replied that he had been taken for a Hindoo, which from the regularity of his features + fine eyes, might easily have been the case. Napoleon told him that travellers were privileged to tell marvellous stories, + he hoped he was not doing so, in relating the wonders of Thibet. He wanted to know if it were true that the revenues of the Grand Lama were derived from the gifts of the multitudes that daily flocked from all parts to worship at his shrine, as well as from priestly extortion. Manning told the Emperor it was quite true, + complimented him upon being as well informed as the traveller himself. The Lama was subject to the Chinese: he never married, neither did his priest: the body into which, according to their belief, the spirit passed, was found out by the priests from certain signs. Napoleon's conference with the traveller lasted some time: he asked a thousand questions respecting the Chinese, their language, customs &c. When the interview was concluded, he observed that it had given him greater pleasure than he had experienced for many long months.