

# HARPER'S NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

No. CCLXXI.—DECEMBER, 1872.—VOL. XLVI.

MARCO POLO AND HIS BOOK.\*



PORTRAIT OF KUBLAI-KHAN—FROM A CHINESE ENGRAVING.

WHEN, six centuries ago, Marco Polo, the medieval Herodotus, recited the wonderful history of his travels at Venice, as his great prototype had done before him at Athens, his countrymen, regarding his extravagant stories as so many romantic fables or Munchausen-like marvels, conferred upon him the *sobriquet* of "Messer Marco Million;" and long after his death it is related that at the Venetian masks one of the characters

personated was Mark Million, who amused and delighted the crowd with his singular adventures and marvelous stories. When, however, on his death-bed, his friends besought him to retract and revise his book in accordance with the facts, the dying traveler replied that he had not told the half of what he had really and truly seen.

In the light of modern research and exploration, illustrated and explained by Oriental literature and travel, what at one time was regarded as simply the effervescence of a fertile fancy has gradually crystallized, for the most part, into the sober facts of geogra-

\* The Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian. Newly translated and edited, with notes, by Colonel HENRY YULE, C. B. 2 volumes, London: John Murray, 1871.





MARCO POLO.

phy and history, marred, no doubt, by some chronological errors and distorted geographical names—attributable in the main to oral dictation and subsequent transcription—with here and there an intermixture of fable when he describes from hearsay, and of hyperbole when he narrates the results of his own observation. Still there is a vast interval on the score of veracity between the Venetian traveler and Sir John Mandeville, his English contemporary.

Though we are not indebted to Polo for our earliest information respecting China and Central Asia, since, to say nothing of the ancients, during the Middle Ages Carpini and Rubruquis, the Minorite friars, had both preceded him, still he stands deservedly at

the head of medieval travelers, and doubtless contributed more than any other to the advancement of geographical science and our knowledge of Central and Eastern Asia. Nearly six centuries have elapsed with their imposing array of celebrated travelers, but none have arisen to dispute with the illustrious Venetian the palm of being the greatest explorer of the continent of Asia.

The Book of Marco Polo, with the flavor of so many centuries upon its pages, loses little of its interest or popularity. With chapters that read like a passage out of the "Thousand and One Nights," it proposes perplexing puzzles of nomenclature that might satisfy the most ambitious commentator, and suggests problems which are



alike interesting to the antiquarian and scholar, the merchant, politician, and moral reformer. Fifty-seven editions have not sufficed to satisfy the popular demand, and now Colonel Yule presents us with a work of two portly volumes, running through nearly a thousand pages, which, with its rich variety of curious and recondite lore—geographical, historical, linguistic, and literary—its fullness of criticism, its profusion of pictorial illustration, and prodigality of learned annotation, enriching if not encumbering the text, constitutes a perfect thesaurus of profound erudition and laborious research. To the completion of his Herculean task Colonel Yule has brought a fine classical taste, a ripe scholarship, a critical acumen, besides a thorough acquaintance with Eastern manners and customs, as well as medieval geography, which, illustrated and interpreted from his rich stores of knowledge, with untiring assiduity and an exhaustive labor, have constituted the publication of his work an epoch in Oriental research and geographical science. With this passing tribute to the scholarly editor, who most of all deserves the thanks of all lovers of the quaint and fanciful in medieval literature, we proceed to give such an account as we may, within the narrow limits of a magazine article, of Marco Polo and his Book.

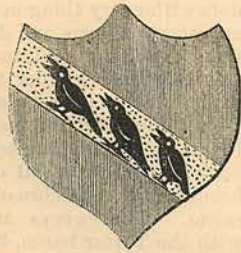
Without attempting, with some antiquarians, to trace the origin of the Polo family to the legendary Lucius Polus, one of the companions of Prince Antenor of Troy, we will simply state that the ascertained genealogy of Marco Polo begins with his grandfather, Andrea Polo, a noble of the parish of San Felice, in Venice, whose family consisted of three sons—Marco, Nicolo, and Maffeo. Of these, Nicolo was the father of Marco, the great traveler. The three brothers were engaged in commerce, and constituted a part-

nership, transacting business and residing for the most part in Constantinople and the Crimea. In 1260 we find Nicolo and Maffeo Polo on a business tour, which for various reasons was ultimately extended as far as Bokhara, and thence to the court of the Great Khan Kublai, at Shangtu, fifty miles to the north of the Great Wall of China, and best known to the English reader as the Tanadu of Coleridge's brilliant little "opium-inspired" poem,

"Where twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round."

This powerful prince received the itinerant merchants not only with favor, but distinction, and lent an eager ear to their description of the Western or Latin world, of its kings and emperors, and most of all of his holiness the pope. He subsequently dispatched them with one of his barons on an embassy to the latter, with a request that he would send him a hundred missionaries and teachers, "intelligent men, acquainted with the seven arts," conceiving, though a Buddhist, that the Christian religion was just what was needed to soften and civilize his rude, barbarian subjects of the steppes. In truth, at the time when the Polos first visited the court of the Great Khan, though throughout all Asia, as Colonel Yule observes, scarcely a dog might bark without Mongol leave, the Tartar hordes were already becoming an object of hope rather than fear, as a possible breakwater against the inroads of Mohammedanism.

The emperor, after providing his embassa-



ARMS OF THE POLO FAMILY.



THE GREAT KHAN DELIVERING A GOLDEN TABLET TO THE ELDER POLO BROTHERS—FROM A MINIATURE OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.



dors with every thing needful in the way of an escort of men and horses, delivered to them a tablet of gold, inscribed upon which was the prince's order to furnish for their use "every thing required in all the countries through which they should pass," at the same time charging them "to bring back to him some oil of the lamp which burns on the sepulchre of our Lord at Jerusalem." The envoys accordingly set out with the Tartar baron, but before they had proceeded far the latter fell sick, and was reluctantly left behind. When in 1269 they had arrived as far as Acre they received intelligence of the death of Pope Clement IV., and that his successor had not yet been elected. Acting upon the advice of Theobald of Piacenza, the pope's legate residing at Acre, they resolved, "while the pope was a-making," on visiting their native town of Venice, and there await a new election. Here Nicolo learns the death of his wife, but finds instead his son Marco, now grown to be a fine lad of fifteen, "and this Marco is he of whom the book tells."

The papal interregnum was the longest on record, at least since the Dark Ages. Two years had elapsed, and yet was the throne of St. Peter vacant. The brothers Polo, when they saw that "never a pope was made," unwilling to be suspected of bad faith by Kublai-Khan, resolved to return to his court. They accordingly set out, accompanied by young Marco, and passing through Acre, where they obtained some of the oil of the Holy Sepulchre, had already reached the port of Ayas on the Gulf of Scanderoon, when the news of the final election of a pope overtook them, and that the choice of the sacred college had fallen upon their old friend the Archdeacon Theobald, who had now become Gregory X. They returned at once to Acre, and made their humble obeisance to the new pontiff; but instead of the hundred missionaries and teachers, received two Dominican friars, and the papal benediction, as an equivalent, it may be, for the other ninety-eight. With these and the holy oil, together with letters and presents from the pope to the Great Khan, they again proceeded to Ayas, where they learned that the famous Mameluke Sultan Bibars with an invading host of Saracens lay directly across their proposed route of travel. The good Dominicans, who, it appears, did not covet martyrdom, esteeming "discretion the better part of valor," surrendered their credentials to the Polos, and returned incontinently to Acre. The two brothers, with Marco, however, proceeded on their way by a different route, reaching the court of Kublai after an overland trip of three years and a half. This was probably in 1275. The adventurous Venetians received a most cordial welcome from the Great Khan, who at once took kindly to young Marco, by this

time a *joenne bachelor*, as the text calls him, of about one-and-twenty.

The "young bachelor" grew rapidly in favor at court, addressing himself meanwhile to the study of the native languages, and acquiring no less than four "sundry written characters," probably Mongolian, Uighur, Persian, and Thibetan. The emperor, seeing his discretion and ability, soon began to employ him in the public service, not only in domestic administration, probably as commissioner or agent attached to the Privy Council, but also on distant embassies. His first mission, as he himself relates, was to the province of Yunnan, a wild and remote district to the east of Thibet, and now as then a vast ethnological *terra incognita*. While at court Polo had not failed to observe the keen relish with which Kublai listened to accounts of foreign travel, especially the strange customs, manners, and peculiarities of foreign countries, and his undisguised contempt for the stupidity of his envoys, who, on returning from abroad, could tell him nothing "except the business on which they had gone." Profiting by these observations, he took care to store his memory with curious facts and amusing incidents, and on his return to court he did not fail to give an account of all the "novelties and strange things which he had seen and heard," to the great amusement and delight of the emperor. He subsequently held for three years the government of the great city of Yangchau, or, according to some authorities, the vicerealty of one of the imperial provinces. At one time we hear of him at Tangut, and then at Karakorum, the old Mongolian capital of the khans; now on a mission in Cochin China, and soon after on an expedition to the Indian seas. On these and all other occasions Polo, it appears, acquitted himself with great credit, recommending himself more and more to the favor of his imperial master, who treated him with such marked distinction that some of his "barons waxed very envious thereat."

Thus did the Venetians continue in the Great Khan's service for eleven years, Marco acquiring fame, his father and uncle fortune. The latter, fearing what might become of their "great wealth in jewels and gold," in the event of Kublai's death, who was now past fourscore, "longed to carry their gear and their own gray heads" safe home again to the Venetian lagoons. But Kublai-Khan had become so strongly attached to the clever and amiable foreigners that, like King Theodore of more recent memory, he absolutely refused to let them go.

It so happened, however, that the wife of Arghun, Khan of Persia, and Kublai's grand-nephew, died, with the dying injunction that her place should be supplied by one of her own kin of the Mongol tribe of Bayaut. An embassy, consisting of three barons, was ac-



cordingly dispatched by Arghun to that distant country to procure such a bride, to be selected by Kublai. The emperor received the ambassadors with distinguished consideration, and elected the Lady Kukachin, a maiden of seventeen, "*moult bele dame et avenant*," of the family of the deceased Queen Bolgona. The overland route being imperiled by war, in addition to its wearisome length, the barons decided to proceed home with their tender and beautiful charge by sea, and begged as a favor from Kublai that the three Venetians, on account of their great knowledge and experience of the Indian Sea and the countries through which they must pass, might accompany them. This request the emperor

granted with great reluctance, but having done so, fitted them out right royally for the voyage, at the same time charging the Polos with friendly greetings to the various potentates of Christendom. Their departure took place, with thirteen four-masted ships, in the early part of 1292. After a long and wearisome voyage, involving protracted detentions, to which, however, we are indebted for some of the most interesting chapters in the book, they at length arrived at their destination. The three Venetians with their fair charge, who seems to have entertained for them a filial regard, survived the hardships of the voyage, but two of the three envoys and the larger part of their numerous suit, "in number some six hundred persons, without counting the mariners," had perished by the way. Meanwhile Arghun, Kukachin's intended husband, had died also, so that his son Ghazan succeeded to the lady's hand. The Venetians, as soon as their mission was accomplished, took leave of their royal host, who provided them with a princely escort, while the beautiful Kukachin, "who looked on each of those three as a father, wept for sorrow at the parting." After a lengthy sojourn at Tabriz they proceeded homeward, reaching Venice, according to Polo's statement, "in the year 1295 of Christ's Incarnation."



MARCO POLO—FROM A VENETIAN MOSAIC.

Ramusio relates that on the return of the Polos to their native city the same fate befell them as befell Ulysses, who, on his return to his native Ithaca, after his twenty years' wanderings, was recognized by nobody. Decidedly changed in aspect, with a "certain indescribable smack of the Tartar both in air and accent," their own vernacular well-nigh forgotten, their clothes of a Tartar cut, travel-stained, shabby, and coarse, they with difficulty gained admittance into their own house, now occupied by their relatives, who had long since given them up as dead. To dispel all doubts respecting their personal identity they invited their kinsfolk to a splendid entertainment, and when the hour arrived for sitting down to table, they all three appeared dressed in robes of crimson satin, and afterward at intervals during the entertainment these were exchanged first for suits of crimson damask, then for robes of crimson velvet, and then for costumes similar to those of the rest of the company. Each of these costly suits, as it was exchanged for another, was by their orders first cut to pieces and afterward divided among the servants. The wonder and amazement of the guests, however, reached its climax when, after the removal of the cloth, Marco rising from the table and bringing out from an adjoining chamber the three



coarse and shabby dresses they had worn upon their first arrival, the three Polos set to work with sharp knives ripping up the welts and seams, when vast numbers of the finest and largest diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires, and carbuncles fell like a shower upon the table.

With such golden premises the conclusion was irresistible. There could no longer be any possible doubt as to their personal identity. All Venice, "gentle and simple," flocked to see and embrace them. An office of great dignity was conferred upon Messer Maffeo, the eldest, while the young men, who came daily to visit the "polite and gracious" Messer Marco, never tired in listening to his recital of the wonders of Cathay and the splendors of the court of the Great Khan. As Polo in his relation frequently made use of the term millions, they nicknamed him "Messer Marco Millioni," and the court in which he resided the "Corte del Millioni."

Another version of the same tradition relates "that the wife of one of them gave away to a beggar that came to the door one of those garments of his, all torn, patched, and dirty as it was. The next day he asked his wife for that mantle of his, in order to put away the jewels that were sewn up in it, but she told him she had given it away to a poor man whom she did not know. Now the stratagem he employed to recover it was this. He went to the bridge of Rialto, and stood there turning a wheel, to no apparent purpose, but as if he were a madman, and to all those who crowded around to see what prank was this, and asked him why he did it, he answered, 'He'll come, if God pleases.' So after two or three days he recognized his old coat on the back of one of those who came to stare at his mad proceeding, and got it back again."

Shortly after his return to his native city the Venetians fitted out a naval expedition, commanded by Andrea Dandolo, against the Genoese under Lamba Doria, and Polo was placed in command of one of the Venetian galleys. The rival fleets encountered each other at Curzola (1298), not far from Lissa of more recent fame, when the Venetians were completely beaten, and Polo, with Dandolo and seven thousand others, made prisoner, and sent in irons to Genoa. Here in his dungeon he dictated the story of his travels and adventures to a fellow-prisoner, Rusticiano, or Rustichello, of Pisa, a name not unknown to literature as a compiler of French romances, who committed it to writing. And thus are we probably indebted to Polo's captivity for our account of the traveler's adventurous story.

Of the personal history of Polo during the quarter of a century he survived subsequent to his release from his Genoese prison in 1299 we know comparatively little. We gather from his last will and testament,

which was executed in 1324, that he left a wife and three daughters, Fantina, Bellela, and Morela, whom he constituted his trustees. One of the provisions of the will runs thus: "I release Peter the Tartar, my servant, from all bondage as completely as I pray God to release my own soul from all sin and guilt." He furthermore enjoins that "if any one shall presume to violate this will, may he incur the malediction of God Almighty, and abide bound under the anathema of the three hundred and eighteen Fathers." He probably died within a year after the execution of his will, and was buried, according to his own request, in the Church of San Lorenzo, which having been rebuilt in 1592, all traces of the illustrious traveler's tomb have unfortunately disappeared.

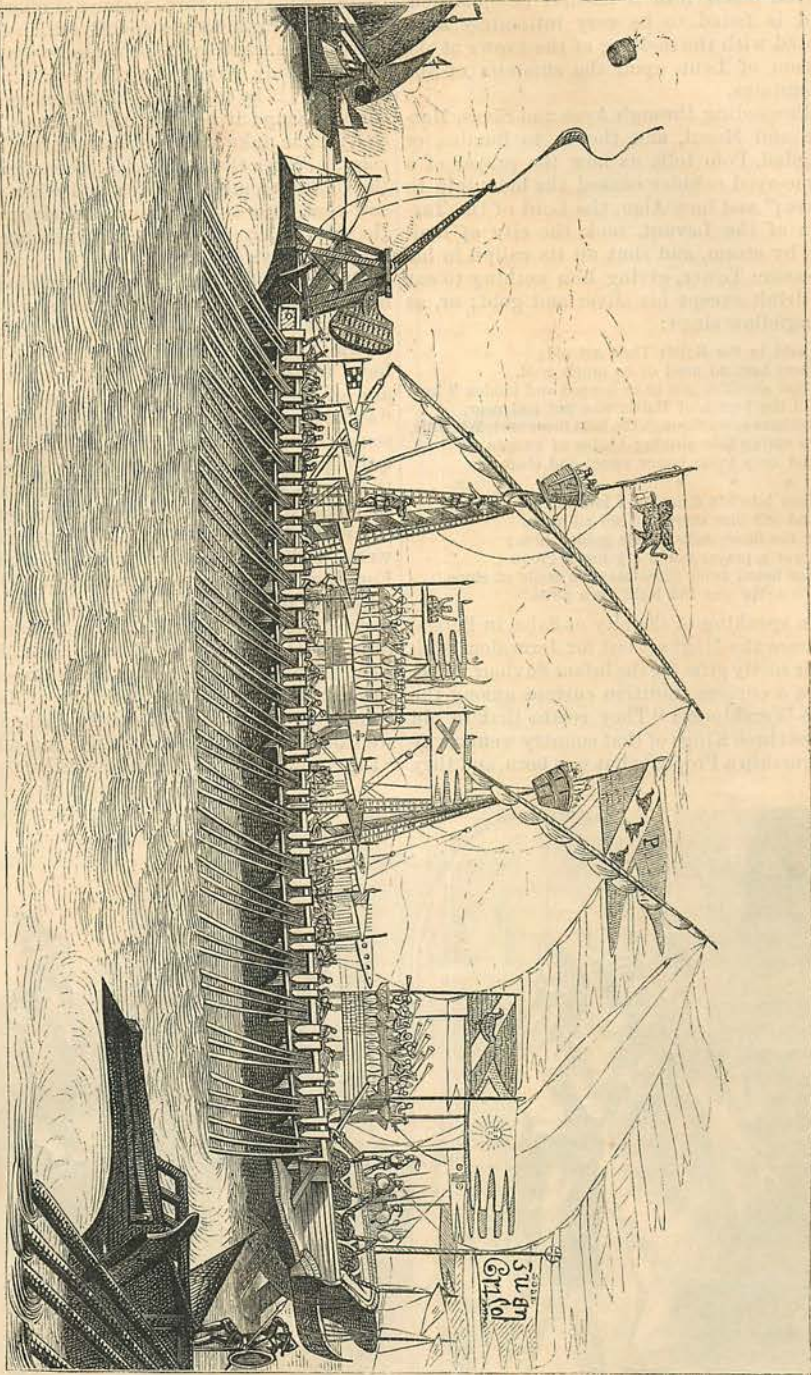
Polo's "Travels" consists of a prologue and four books. In the former, after recommending its perusal to the "great princes, emperors and kings, dukes and marquises, counts, knights, and burgesses, and people of all degrees who desire to get knowledge of the various races of mankind, and of the diversities of the sundry regions of the world," he proceeds to give a brief and interesting account, as already substantially related, of the two journeys of the Polos to the court of the Great Khan, of their lengthy sojourn in Cathay, or China, and their subsequent return to their native city by the way of Persia and the Indian seas. The latter embraces a series of chapters descriptive of the curious manners, notable sights, and remarkable events, together with the commerce and staple agricultural products of the various provinces of Asia, relating more especially, however, to the court of the Great Khan Kublai, his wealth and power, wars and administration. The greater part of the fourth book, which in a verbose and monotonous manner describes the wars between the various branches of the house of Chinghiz, Colonel Yule has judiciously omitted from his edition on account of its endless repetitions, so that in his hands Polo's book, like the Yunnan horses of which he tells us, is presented to us "docked of some joints of the tail."

There has been no little controversy as to the language in which Polo's book was originally written. Some authorities have assumed that it was Latin; others, with more plausibility, have held that it was Venetian; but it would appear now to be definitely settled that the original was French, not, indeed, the "French of Paris," but just such French as we might expect in the thirteenth century from a Tuscan amanuensis following the oral dictation of an Orientalized Venetian.

Setting out from Acre in 1271, the route of the Polos lay through Armenia and Georgia, where "in old times the kings



MARCO POLO'S GALLEY GOING INTO ACTION AT CHERZOLIA.



were born with the figure of an eagle upon the right shoulder," and where, near the convent of nuns called St. Leonard's, "there is a great lake at the foot of a mountain, and in this lake are found no fish, great or

small, throughout the year till Lent come, when the finest fish in the world are found in great abundance, and that until Easter-eve. 'Tis really a passing great miracle." This great miracle, however, has since re-



solved itself into a natural phenomenon, and is found to be very intimately associated with the melting of the snows at the season of Lent upon the summits of the mountains.

Proceeding through Ayas and Sivas, Mardin and Mosul, and thence to Baudas, or Bagdad, Polo tells us how the prayer of a "one-eyed cobbler caused the mountain to move;" and how Alan, the Lord of the Tartars of the Levant, took the city of Baudas by storm, and shut up its caliph in his Treasure Tower, giving him nothing to eat or drink except his silver and gold; or, as Longfellow sings:

"I said to the Kalif: Thou art old;  
Thou hast no need of so much gold.  
Thou shouldst not have heaped and hidden it here  
Till the breath of Battle was hot and near,  
But have sown through the land these useless hoards,  
To spring into shining blades of swords,  
And keep thine honor sweet and clear.

"Then into his dungeon I locked the drone,  
And left him there to feed all alone  
In the honey-cells of his golden hive:  
Never a prayer nor a cry nor a groan  
Was heard from those massive walls of stone,  
Nor again was the Kalif seen alive."

In speaking of the city of Saba, in Persia, whence the Magi set out for Jerusalem with their costly gifts for the infant Saviour, he relates a curious tradition current among the Fire-Worshippers: "They relate that in old times three Kings of that country went away to worship a Prophet that was born, and they

carried with them three manner of offerings, Gold and Frankincense and Myrrh, in order to ascertain whether that Prophet were God, or an earthly King, or a Physician. For, said they, if he take the Gold, then he is an earthly King; if he take the Incense, he is God; if he take the Myrrh, he is a Physician.....When they presented their offerings the Child accepted all three, and when they saw that, they said within themselves that He was the True God and the True King and the True Physician."

On the route from Baudas through Kerman to Hormuz, Polo takes occasion to speak with enthusiasm of the large, snow-white, hump-shouldered oxen, that "when they have to be loaded kneel like the camel," and of sheep "as big as asses," with tails "so large and fat that one tail shall weigh some thirty pounds." From Hormuz it is quite probable that the travelers intended to embark for India, but were deterred from so doing by the unpromising character of the ships that frequented that port, which were, without doubt, "wretched affairs." For, having no iron to make nails of, "they stitch the planks with twine made from the bark of the Indian nut." They accordingly retraced their steps to Kerman, and from thence proceeded in a northerly direction through Cobinan to the province of Tonocain, where "is found the *Arbre Sol*, which we Christians call the *Arbre Sec*," and where "the people of the country tell you was



ALAU SHUTS UP THE CALIPH OF BAUDAS IN HIS TREASURE TOWER.



fought the battle between Alexander and King Darius."

Polo has here, without doubt, confounded the *Arbre Sol* of Alexandrian romance with the *Arbre Sec* of Christian legend. The former plays an important part in the legendary cyclus of Alexandrian fable, as the oracular Tree of the Sun that foretold Alexander's death. The latter corresponds most probably with the legendary oak of Abraham at Hebron, of which Sir John Mandeville quaintly says: "Theye seye that it hathe ben there sithe the beginnyng of the World; and was sumtyme grene and bare Leves, unto the Tyme that Oure Lord dyede on the Cros; and thanne it dryede." Colonel Yule is of the opinion that the *Arbre Sec* of

Polo was some venerable specimen of the chinar or Oriental plane in the vicinity of Bostam or Damghan, and relates a number of instances in which such trees, either from age, position, or accident, were invested with a sacred character, and hung with amulets and votive offerings by devout pilgrims, who held them in superstitious veneration.

Several chapters are devoted by Polo to the Old Man of the Mountain, Aloadin of Mulehet, who transformed a certain valley into an earthly paradise of the Mohammedan type, into which he introduced youths of from twelve to twenty years of age, after administering to them a sleeping potion of wondrous potency, so that when they awoke "they deemed it was Paradise in very truth." These youths were called Ashishin; "for when the Old Man would have any prince slain or enemy murdered, he would cause that potion to be given to one of their number in the garden, and then had him carried into his castle. And when the young man awoke he would say, 'Go thou and slay so and so, and when thou returnest my angels shall bear thee into Paradise;' and so it was that there was no order of his that they would not affront any peril to execute, for the great desire they had to get back into that Paradise of his." According to De Sacy, these youths were called *Hashishin*, from their use of the preparation of hemp called *hashish*, and thence through their



*Comment les arbres du soleil et de la lune profitte  
tiferent la mort aliyantzze.*

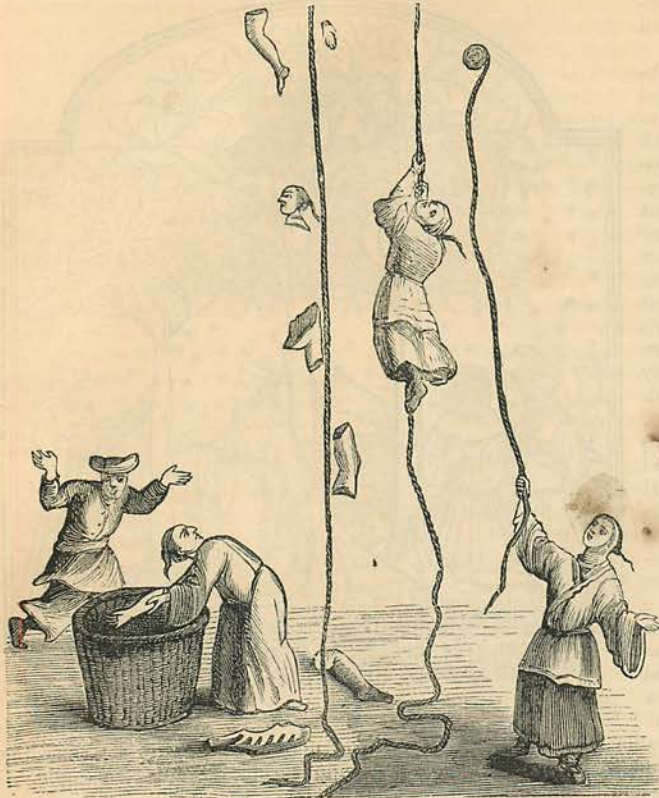
THE ORACULAR TREES OF THE SUN AND MOON.

system of murder and terrorism came the modern application of the word assassin.

From Mulehet, or Alamut, the reader is transported to Sepourgan, and thence to (Bal) Balkh, a "noble city and a great," whose inhabitants "tell that it was here that Alexander took to wife the daughter of Darius." Thence by Talikan, Casem or Kishm, through the province of Badakshan, "where the Balas rubies and azure are found," to the celebrated plateau of Pamier, "said to be the highest place in the world," and midway between heaven and earth; or, to use a native expression, the *Bám-i-Duniah*, or "Roof of the World," and possibly the site of the primeval Arian paradise. Polo here takes occasion to speak of the fine pasturage, "where a lean beast will fatten to your heart's content in ten days," and of "wild sheep of great size, whose horns are good six palms in length." A pair of horns from one of these sheep, which have received the name of *Ovis poli* in honor of the great traveler, sent by Wood to the Royal Asiatic Society, measured four feet eight inches on the curve, and one foot two and a quarter inches at the base.

Descending the Pamier steppe the Polos proceeded to Kashgar, thence to Yarkand, Khotan, Lake Lop, and the Great Desert, where the traveler who chances to lag behind his party "will hear spirits talking, and will suppose them to be his comrades. Sometimes the spirits will call him by





CHINESE CONJURING EXTRAORDINARY.

name; and thus shall a traveler oftentimes be led astray, so that he never finds his party. And in this way many have perished..... And sometimes you shall hear the sound of a variety of musical instruments, and still more commonly the sound of drums." Hwen Thsang, in his passage of the same desert, speaks of "visions of troops marching and halting, with gleaming arms and waving banners, constantly shifting, vanishing, and reappearing."

Marco Polo and Colonel Yule furnish us here and elsewhere with phenomena that would appear to embrace, if not transcend, the whole encyclopaedia of modern spiritualism. When, for example, the Great Khan, "seated upon a platform some eight cubits above the pavement, desires to drink, cups filled with wine are moved from a buffet in the centre of the hall, a distance of ten paces, and present themselves to the emperor without being touched by any body." The feats ascribed in ancient legends to Simon Magus, such as the moving of cups and other vessels, making statues to walk, causing closed doors to fly open spontaneously, were by no means unusual among the Bacsi, or Thibetan priests, whose performances, if we are to believe our trav-

eler, might well excite the envy of modern spiritual mediums. Producing figures of their divinities in empty space; making a pencil to write answers to questions without any body touching it; sitting upon nothing; flying through the air, penetrating every where as if immaterial; conjuring up mist, fog, snow, and rain, by which battles were lost or won; preventing clouds and storms from passing over the emperor's palace; reading the most secret human thoughts, foretelling future events, and even raising the dead—these and many other wonderful feats could be performed by means of the *Dhārani*, or mystical Indian charms.

In this connection Colonel Yule

furnishes us with some examples of Chinese jugglery really so extraordinary that we can not forbear quoting a single extract.

Ibn Batuta, the Arabian, whose marvelous account has been more recently corroborated by Edward Melton, the Anglo-Dutch traveler, relates that when present at a great entertainment at the court of the Viceroy of Khansa (Kinsay of Polo, or Hangchaufu), "a juggler, who was one of the Khan's slaves, made his appearance, and the amir said to him, 'Come and show us some of your marvels.' Upon this he took a wooden ball with several holes in it, through which long thongs were passed, and, laying hold of one of these, slung it into the air. It went so high that we lost sight of it altogether. (It was the hottest season of the year, and we were outside in the middle of the palace court.) There now remained only a little of the end of a thong in the conjurer's hand, and he desired one of the boys who assisted him to lay hold of it and mount. He did so, climbing by the thong, and we lost sight of him also! The conjurer then called to him three times, but getting no answer, he snatched up a knife, as if in a great rage, laid hold of the thong, and disappeared also! By-and-by he threw



down one of the boy's hands, then a foot, then the other hand, and then the other foot, then the trunk, and, last of all, the head! Then he came down himself, all puffing and panting, and with his clothes all bloody, kissed the ground before the amir, and said something to him in Chinese. The amir gave some order in reply, and our friend then took the lad's limbs, laid them together in their places, and gave a kick, when, presto! there was the boy, who got up and stood before us! All this astonished me beyond measure, and I had an attack of palpitation like that which overcame me once before in the presence of the Sultan of India, when he showed me something of the same kind. They gave me a cordial, however, which cured the attack. The Kazi Afkharuddin was next to me, and quoth he, 'Wallah! 'tis my opinion there has been neither going up nor coming down, neither marring nor mending; 'tis all hocus-pocus!'

After thirty days of wearisome travel through the great desert of Gobi the Polos traverse the province of Tangut until they reach Karakorum, and thence proceed to Tenduc, the capital of the famous Prester John—he, "in fact, about whose great dominion all the world talks," but about whom the world really knows little or nothing at all. That such a prince existed in the far East, and that he was a great Christian conqueror, of enormous wealth and power, was universally believed in Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Subsequently the local habitation of the "Royal Presbyter" was transferred from the East to Abyssinia. In fact, more than one Asiatic potentate has played the shadowy rôle of this quasi-mythical personage. The original Prester John, first introduced to the Latin world by the Syrian Bishop of Gabala, was probably Gurkhan, the founder of a great empire in Asia during the twelfth century, known as Kará-khitai, of whose profession of Christianity, however, there is no trustworthy evidence. Another was Kushluk, the Naiman Prince—the Prester John of Rubruquis—while the Prester John of Marco Polo was Unc-Khan, the chief of the Kerait, both contemporaries with Chinghiz (Jenghis) Khan, who, "in the greatest battle that ever was seen," overwhelmed the host of Prester John, conquered his kingdom, and became the founder of a new dynasty.

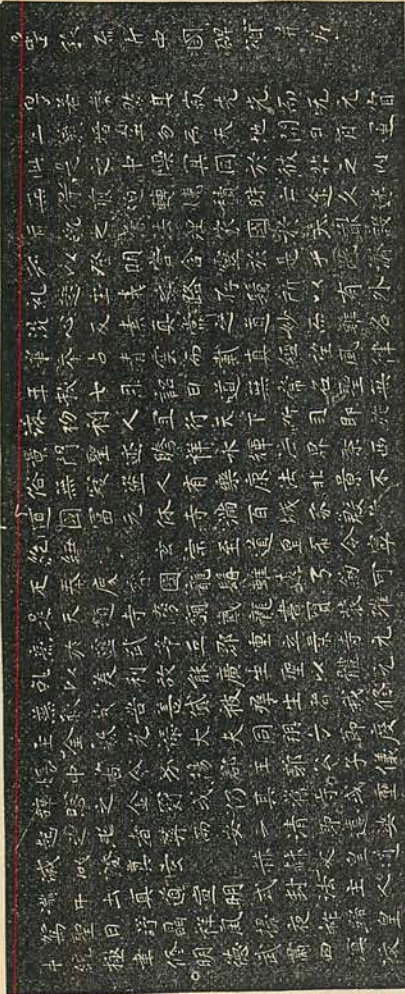
Many, no doubt, will be surprised, in reading Polo's book, to observe the frequent indications it affords of the widespread diffusion of Christianity in his day throughout Central and Eastern Asia. Without laying too much stress upon the reputed preaching of the Gospel and planting of churches by the apostles in Persia, India, and China, though there is good reason to believe that St. Thomas, whose body, according to Polo,

lies buried near Madras, preached the Gospel in the far East, still it is quite certain that Christianity at an early day was disseminated quite generally throughout Asia and the islands of the Indian Ocean. At a very early period there were Christian bishops at Susa and Persepolis, at Herat, Samarcand, and in Seistan, while the Catalan map bears witness to the existence of an Armenian monastery near Lake Issi-kul, to the north of Kashgar. Christianity was introduced into China in the early part of the seventh century, about the same time as Mohammedanism, or immediately after the era of the Hegira. In fact, during this and the succeeding centuries there were flourishing Christian churches in every considerable city of Central Asia as far east as Yarkand and Kashgar, with a "chain of bishops and metropolitans from Jerusalem to Pekin."

In Polo's time we find Christians not only all along his route of travel to the court of the Great Khan, but also on his return voyage along the Coromandel Coast, in Abyssinia, and especially in Socotra, an island of the Indian Sea. Nor were these simply missionary outposts. Kashgar was the seat of a metropolitan see, and so was Socotra, traces of which remained as late as the seventeenth century. At Mosul we find Nestorian and Jacobite Christians, with a patriarch at their head. According to Polo, this "patriarch, whom they call the jatolic, creates archbishops and abbots and prelates of all other degrees, and sends them into every quarter, as to India, to Baudas, or to Cathay, just as the Pope of Rome does in the Latin countries."

Though Polo preserves a most remarkable silence with regard to the Christians he must have met with at the court of the Great Khan, yet we learn from collateral testimony that they were quite numerous in Pekin, at that time the Mongol capital. The Alans, who were reckoned the best soldiers in the khan's army, some of whom held the highest rank at the Cambaluc court, were at least nominal Christians, and we find them in 1336 dispatching an urgent request to Pope Benedict XII. to nominate a successor to the deceased Archbishop of Pekin, John of Monte Corvino. Rubruquis, the French friar, who was sent in 1253 by St. Louis on a mission to Mangu-Khan, Kublai's elder brother, with a view of inducing him to espouse the declining fortunes of the Crusaders by attacking their common foe, the Saracen, from the eastward, found Nestorians and Jacobites, Greeks and Armenians, all congregated at the Great Khan's court. It does not appear, however, that the Mongol emperors, with possibly one or two exceptions, ever made an open profession of Christianity, though a number of them married Christian wives, and employed native Christians as





FAC-SIMILE OF A PORTION OF THE CELEBRATED INSCRIPTION OF SINGANFU.

in very truth may aid me." Had Kublai's requisition, however, for a hundred missionaries, though dictated from motives of public policy, been responded to by Pope Gregory—in view of the superiority at that time of the Latin monks to the degenerate Nestorian clergy in ability and culture, if not practical piety—it might have given a new and powerful impulse to Christian evangelization, which would have made Christianity at this day the dominant religion throughout the Orient.

It is a melancholy fact, and one that suggests grave reflections to the Christian reformer, that scarcely a vestige now remains of the Christian church that once flourished so extensively throughout Central and Eastern Asia. The famous Singanfu inscription is the most remarkable, if not the only, remaining memorial. This celebrated monument, discovered in a suburb of Singanfu in 1625, and still to be seen amidst the ruins of a temple outside the city walls, created no small stir among the *savants* of that day, and has by no means lost its melancholy interest in ours. The slab upon which it is engraved in Chinese and Syriac characters bears the date of A.D. 781, and appears to have been intended to commemorate the introduction of Christianity into China in 635. It contains a brief record of the rise and spread of the new religion for the next one hundred years, with a synopsis of Christian doctrine, in which, strange to say, there is no allusion whatever to the Crucifixion. Though its genuineness has been called in question by able critics, it would seem as if Pauthier, Rémusat, and Colonel Yule had vindicated its authenticity beyond all reasonable doubt.

As to the causes which led to the decadence and final disappearance of Christianity in the East, it may be observed that the purity of Christian doctrine and practice appears to have become gradually corrupted by its constant contact with idolatry; and finally, by ingrafting upon its ceremonial, from time to time, pagan rites and ceremonies, it at length became merged into paganism itself. Polo relates that in his time Christian priests practiced astrology with a "kind of astrolabe," together with divination by rods, the same as the priests of Buddha; while in Abyssinia, he tells us, they observed the double baptism of fire and water—the former by branding a mark upon the forehead and either cheek with a hot iron. Abulfeda, in speaking of the inhabitants of Socotra, says they were "Nestorian Christians and pirates." As late as the seventeenth century, while they entertained a blind idolatry for the cross, they practiced circumcision and sacrificed to the moon—a singular medley of Judaism, idolatry, and a pseudo-Christianity.

Some of the most interesting chapters of

their ministers of state. Sigatai, an uncle of Kublai, appears to have embraced the Christian faith; while Nazan, Kublai's cousin and vassal, and ruler of a vast extent of territory, was a Christian prince who, like Charlemagne, emblazoned the cross upon his banner. Kublai, though nominally a Buddhist, was tolerant, if not indifferent to all creeds, whether Jewish, Christian, or Mohammedan, patronizing all and believing none, regarding religion as simply a civilizing agent, and hence an important factor in any well-adjusted system of civil polity. His creed, according to Ramusio, appears to have been as follows: "There are four prophets worshiped and revered by all the world. The Christians say their God is Jesus Christ; the Saracens, Mohammed; the Jews, Moses; the Idolaters, Sogomon Borcan, who was the first god among the idols; and I worship and pay respect to all four, and pray that he among them who is greatest in heaven

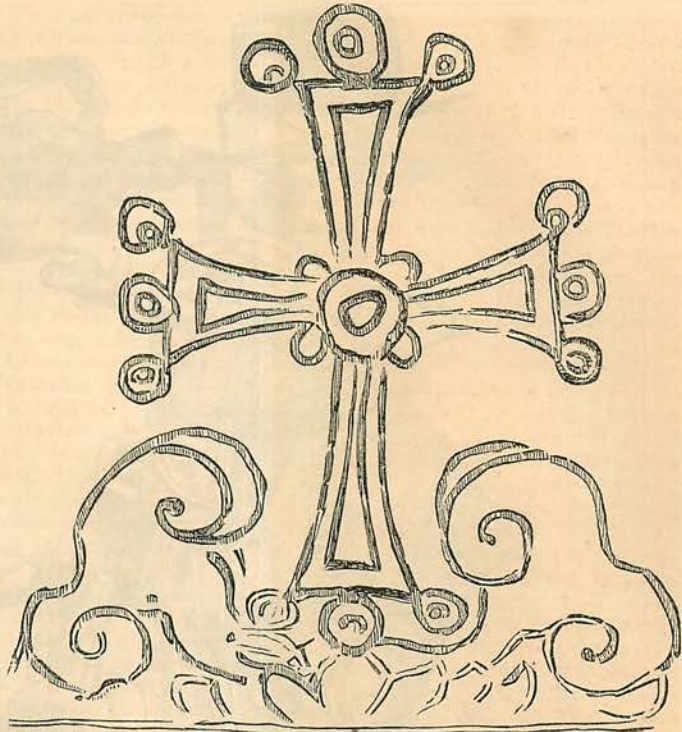


Polo's book are devoted to a description of the various customs, manner of life, etc., of the Tartars. "Their houses," he says, "are circular, and are made of wands covered with felts. These are carried along with them whithersoever they go. They also have wagons covered with black felt so efficaciously that no rain can get in. These are drawn by oxen and camels, and the women and children travel in them. They eat all kinds of flesh, including that of horses and dogs and Pharaoh's rats. Their drink is mare's milk." The account of Herodotus, in speaking of the Scyths, agrees perfectly with that of Polo; while Æschylus, in "Prometheus Bound," alludes to the

"wandering Scyths who dwell  
In latticed huts high poised on easy wheels."

Their wagons, he continues, are "sometimes of enormous size." Rubruquis affirms that he measured one, and found the interval between the wheels to be twenty feet. "The axle was like a ship's mast, and twenty-two oxen were yoked to the wagon, eleven abreast."

Then, too, what fierce and hardy warriors these Tartar horsemen must have been! Armed with bow and arrow, sword and mace, dressed in the skins of wild beasts, or incased in mail of buffalo hide, inured to hardship and incapable of fatigue, fleet as the wind and irresistible as the storm, without commissary or quartermaster, pontoons or baggage-trains, if need be riding on ten days running, spending the livelong night in the saddle, without lighting a fire or taking a meal, these capital archers and superb horsemen, like the Parthian cavalry, were never so certain of victory as when apparently in full retreat. If in their advance a broad, deep river was to be crossed, they tied their equipments to their horses' tails, seized them by the mane, and so swam over. If put upon short rations, they sustained themselves upon the blood of their horses,



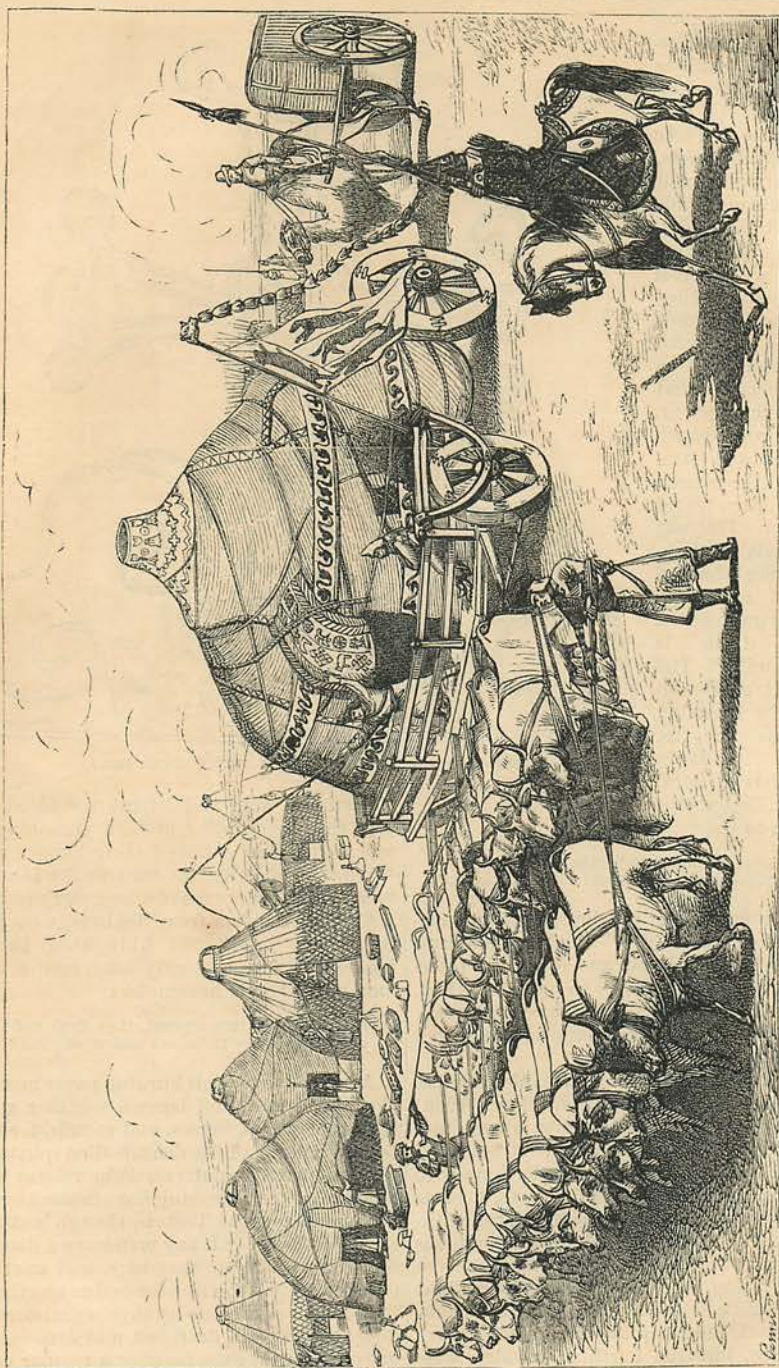
CROSS ON THE MONUMENT AT SINGANFU (ACTUAL SIZE.)

"opening a vein and letting the blood jet into their mouths," and then stanching it when they had satisfied their hunger and thirst. "But why," as our traveler is wont to say, "should we make a long story of it?" A Chinese fugitive from Bokhara, who had tested the quality of Chinghiz's Tartar hordes, has unconsciously condensed a volume into a single hexameter:

"They came and they sapped, they fired and they  
slew, trussed up their loot and were gone."

As germane to their burning paper money, clothing, armor, and houses, together with figures of slaves, horses, and camels, for the benefit and use of the disembodied spirits of their departed relatives, Polo relates the following even more singular custom as prevailing among the Tartars, though not peculiar to them. "If any man have a daughter who dies before marriage, and another man have had a son also die before marriage, the parents of the two arrange a grand wedding between the dead lad and lass. And marry them they do, making a regular contract! And when the contract papers are made out, they put them in the fire, in order (as they will have it) that the parties in the other world may know the fact, and so look on each other as man and wife. Whatever may be agreed on between the parties as dowry, those who have to pay it cause it to





MEDIEVAL TARTAR HUTS AND WAGONS.

be painted on pieces of paper, and then put these in the fire, saying that in that way the dead person will get all the real articles in the other world." When an emperor dies they kill all his best horses, and put to the sword every person whom the funeral cor-

tége may chance to meet on its way to the burial, believing "that all such as they slay in this manner do go to serve their lord in the other world. And I tell you as a certain truth that when Mongou-Kaan died, more than twenty thousand persons, who chanced



to meet the body on its way, were slain in the manner I have told."

Leaving Tenduc, and skirting along the Great Wall of China—though, singularly enough, Polo makes no mention of it, unless inferentially when speaking of the country of "Gog and Magog"—the travelers, after three years and a half of wearisome travel, at length reach Kaiping-fu, the summer court of the Great Khan.

And what shall we say of Polo's hero, the Great Khan, which is by interpretation the "Great Lord of Lords?" Were it not for collateral testimony and our firm faith in the traveler's veracity, we should regard his Kublai as a more extravagant personage than Haroun-al-Raschid, who was a pauper prince in comparison. With eagles for falcons, and lynxes, leopards, and lions for hunting-dogs, he could at any time improvise an army of 360,000 men from his falconers, beaters, and whippers-in. Polo, who had a keen relish for the "noble art," tells us that when the emperor went "a-fowling" he was carried upon four elephants in a fine chamber made of timber, lined inside with plates of beaten gold, and outside with lions' skins, attended by 20,000 huntsmen and 10,000 dogs, moving along abreast of one another, so that the whole line extended over a full day's journey, and "no animal could escape them."

Each of the four empresses of the "Son of Heaven" had a special court of her own, which, with damsels, eunuchs, pages, and other attendants, numbered ten thousand persons. Thirteen times a year the twelve thousand barons attached to his court were furnished out of his privy purse with a golden girdle, and a costly robe corresponding in color to the emperor's own, and "garnished with gems and pearls and other precious things in a very rich and costly manner." His stud of milk-white horses, to which were added by way of New-Year's presents a hundred thousand annually, would have eclipsed those of all the princes and potentates of Europe taken together. On the occasion of the festival of the White Feast his five thousand elephants, "all covered with rich and gay housings of inlaid cloth," together with a great number of camels, each carrying two splendid coffers containing the emperor's gold and silver plate and other costly furniture, were exhibited to the wondering populace. Then Kublai's charities were conducted upon a scale commensurate with his boundless wealth. Besides the five thousand astrologers whom he provided with "annual maintenance and clothing," thirty thousand loaves of bread, "hot from the baking," were by his orders distributed daily to the poor. Six thousand guests had their seats in the dining-hall of his palace, "the greatest that ever was," while those who served him at his meals had mouth and nose "muffled with fine napkins of silk and gold, so that

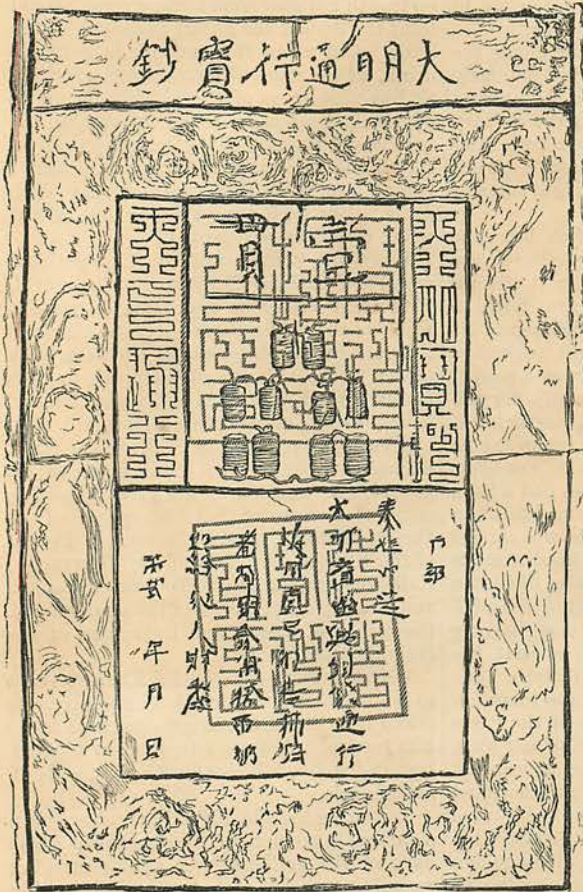
no breath nor odor from their persons should taint the dish or the goblet presented to the lord. And when the emperor is going to drink, all the musical instruments, of which he has vast store of every kind, begin to play. And when he takes the cup, all the barons and the rest of the company drop on their knees and make the deepest obeisance before him, and then the emperor doth drink. But each time that he does so the whole ceremony is repeated."

In a word, "if you were to put together," says Polo, "all the Christians in the world, with their emperors and their kings, the whole of these Christians—ay, and throw in the Saracens to boot—would not have such power or be able to do so much as this Kublai;" while Wassáf, in his Persian history, is, if possible, even more extravagant than the Venetian traveler in exalting the Great Khan, assuring us that "one beam of his glories, one fraction of his great qualities, suffices to eclipse all that history tells of the Cæsars of Rome, of the Chosroes of Persia, of the Khagans of China, of the (Himyarite) Kails of Arabia, of the Tobbas of Yemen, and the Rajahs of India, of the monarchs of the houses of Sassan and Buya, and of the Seljukian Sultans."

Very handsome, too, Kublai-Khan was said to be. If so, his portrait we have given as taken from a Chinese engraving fails to do him justice, unless we adopt as our ideal of beauty the Moorish standard, or the scale of *avoirdupois*.

According to Polo, Kublai must have been a famous financier. "He transformed the bark of the mulberry-tree into something resembling sheets of paper, and these into money, which cost him nothing at all, so that you might say he had the secret of alchemy in perfection. And these pieces of paper he made to pass current universally, over all his kingdoms and provinces and territories, and whithersoever his power and sovereignty extended. And nobody, however important he thought himself, dared to refuse them on pain of death." One might be led to suppose, from Polo's glowing account, that the process of creating value by legal enactment or imperial decree had become one of the "lost arts," did it not subsequently transpire that the Great Khan's legal tender was only worth half its nominal value in silver, and that he was compelled to resort to partial repudiation when, on a subsequent reissue, one note was exchanged against *five* of the previous series of equal nominal value. A similar depreciation of the currency occurred in 1309, notwithstanding a legal provision that the notes should be on a par with specie—a provision which, of course, it was beyond the power of any government to enforce, and only another illustration of the absurdity of attempting to regulate monetary as well as other





BANK-NOTE OF THE MING DYNASTY (ONE-FOURTH SIZE).

values by legislative enactment. Kublai, however, is not entitled to the credit of inventing paper money, which dates back at least to the beginning of the ninth century, though it is not altogether improbable that Marco Polo may have had something to do with its introduction into Persia, if not into Europe.

It is remarkable that Polo, in speaking of Chinese bank-notes, which were stamped with movable blocks, should have failed to say any thing in regard to the art of printing, though his name has been associated, on doubtful authority, with its introduction into Europe. There appears to be a local tradition in Venice that Panfilo Castaldi, of Feltré, having seen several Chinese books, which Polo had brought from China, printed by means of wooden blocks, constructed movable wooden types, each type containing a single letter, and with these printed a number of sheets, some of which are said to be preserved among the archives at Feltré to this day. It relates furthermore that John Fust (Faust) having passed some time

with Castaldi in Italy, acquired his invention, and returning to Germany, developed it into the art of printing. Though there is a strong probability that the art of printing was originally derived from the Chinese, still the Castaldian legend, notwithstanding the statue erected to the memory of Castaldi as the inventor of that noble art, is to be accepted with no small degree of mental reservation.

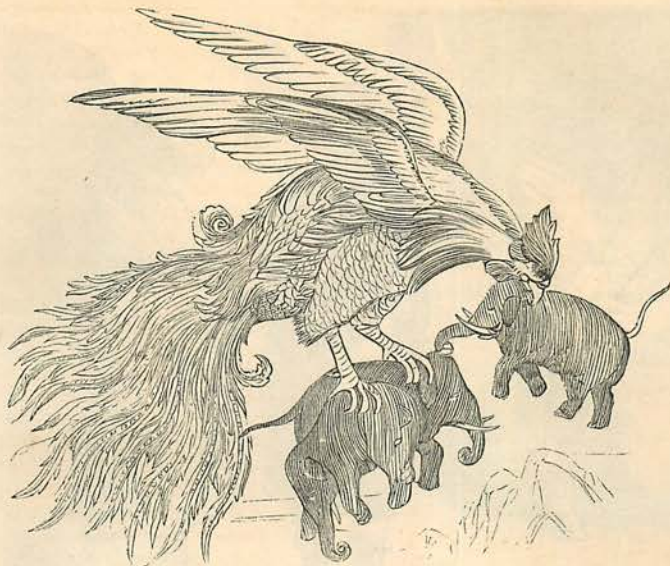
If, according to the teaching of the disciples of John Noyes, the millennium is simply the extension and complete realization of their practices and principles throughout the earth, then Kublai-Khan and his contemporaries were much nearer the millennium than we. Besides those "four ladies called empresses," he had also a great number of concubines. "You must know," says Polo, "that there is a tribe of Tartars called Ungrat, who are noted for their beauty. Now every year a hundred of the most beautiful maidens of this tribe are sent to the Great Khan, who commits them to the charge of certain elderly ladies dwelling in

his palace. And these old ladies make the girls sleep with them, in order to ascertain if they have sweet breath (and do not snore), and are sound in all their limbs. Then such of them as are of approved beauty, and are good and sound in all respects, are appointed to attend on the emperor by turns." In Tartary "any man may take a hundred wives and he so please, if he be able to keep them," while in Malabar "the man who has most wives is most thought of."

In Turkestan, our traveler relates, "if the husband of any woman go away upon a journey and remain away for more than twenty days, as soon as that time is past the woman may marry another man, and the husband also may then marry whom he pleases."

But time would fail us to follow Polo in his journeyings and descriptions—so far to the north that he leaves the North Star behind him, and thence so far to the south that the North Star is never to be seen—to discourse of the siege of Saianfu, with its trebuchets or mangonels, shotted with stones





THE RUKH—AFTER A PERSIAN DRAWING.

of 300 pounds, or of the "most noble city of Kinsay,"

"Stretching like paradise through the breadth of heaven;"

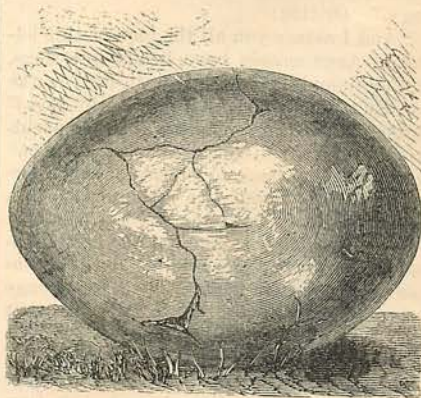
to speak of salamanders resolving themselves into asbestos, and pigmies into monkeys, and turning out to be no pigmies or salamanders after all; of trees producing flour and wine, or "toddy and sugar," and of cattle and horses that live upon fish, and "naught besides;" of kumiz, or fermented mare's milk, that "pearl of all beverages;" of ships with water-tight compartments; of pearl fisheries and shark charmers; of the white eagles of Telingana, and how they are induced to seek diamonds in inaccessible valleys; of the fabulous Gryphon, or Rukh, "so strong that it will seize an elephant in its talons and carry him high into the air," and whose flight is like the loud thunder; of the Male and Female Islands, the former inhabited exclusively by men and the latter by women; of Maabar, or the Coromandel Coast, where there "is never a tailor," seeing that every body adopts the most primitive if not paradisiacal of costumes, and whose inhabitants paint their gods black and their devils white, and rub their black children with oil of sesame to make them still blacker; or of the elixir of longevity, compounded of sulphur and quicksilver, the father and mother respectively of metals; nor yet of the Pátra of green porphyry, the "Holy Grail" of Buddhism, out of which Adam used to eat, and of such miraculous virtue "that if food for one man be put therein it shall become enough for five men." All this, and a great deal besides, most reluctantly we omit.

Vol. XLVI.—No. 271.—2

We may be excused, however, for allowing our author to relate a ridiculous custom of the Zar-dandán, or Golden Teeth, known under the name of the *cou-vade*, which he does with the most imperturbable gravity. "And when one of their wives has been delivered of a child, the infant is washed and swathed, and then the woman gets up and goes about her household affairs, while the husband takes to bed with the child by his side, and so keeps his bed for forty days, and all the

kith and kin come to visit him, and keep up a great festivity. They do this because, say they, the woman has had a hard bout of it, and 'tis but fair the man should have his share of suffering." This custom, notwithstanding its oddity, is by no means unique, but is said to have prevailed among the aborigines of California and the West Indies; among the ancient Corsicans and Iberians of Northern Spain; among some of the tribes of South America, West Africa, and the Indian Archipelago, and in a modified form in Borneo, Kamtchatka, and Greenland. Butler plainly alludes to the custom in "Hudibras," while Apollonius Rhodius, in speaking of the Tibareni of Pontus, tells us,

"In the Tibarenean land,  
When some good woman bears her lord a babe,  
'Tis he is swathed and groaning put to bed;  
While she arises, tends his baths, and serves  
Nice possets for her husband in the straw."



RUKH'S EGG.





DOG-HEADED MEN OF ANGAMANAIN.

"This strange custom," observes Colonel Yule, "if it were unique, would look like a coarse practical joke; but appearing as it does among so many different races and in every quarter of the world, it must have its root somewhere deep in the psychology of the uncivilized man."

Nor are we quite reconciled to omit the following, on account of a certain spicy flavor of Darwinism there is in it:

"Now you must know that in this kingdom of Lambri there are men with tails. These tails are of a palm in length, and have no hair on them. These people live in the mountains, and are a kind of wild men. Their tails are about the thickness of a dog's." Or this:

"And I assure you all the men of this island of Angamanain have heads like dogs, and teeth and eyes likewise; in fact, in the face they are all just like big mastiff dogs!" In Comari there are "monkeys of such peculiar fashion that you would take them for men." Without going back to Ctesias or other corroborative testimony, we are informed in a note that Mr. St. John met with a trader in Borneo who had seen and felt the caudal appendages of such a race inhabiting the north-east coast of that island. This appendage was four inches long, and so inflexible that their proprietors were obliged to use perforated seats. As to the canine-headed feature, without citing other examples, we are reminded that the Cubans described the Car-

ibs to Columbus as man-eaters with dogs' muzzles, while the old Danes had traditions of *Cynocephali* in Finland.

Of the man Marco Polo we know comparatively little. We catch fugitive glimpses of him here and there in his "Travels," enough to excite without satisfying our curiosity. There is, in truth, no authentic portrait of the illustrious Venetian, though there are traditional ones that resemble each other, and doubtless approximate more or less to a likeness of the original. In the faint, shadowy semblance of the traveler as reflected from his book there are dimly visible the lineaments of a plain, practical man, unlettered, but of more than ordinary natural ability, and well up in Alexandrian romance; a shrewd observer, a clever politician, a keen sportsman, and a brave soldier; by no means superior to the credulity and superstition of his age, "with a deep wondering respect for saints of the ascetic pattern, even if pagans, but for his own part a keen appreciation of this world's pomps and vanities."

But though he is strangely reticent respecting himself, he becomes even garrulous when discoursing of what he has seen and heard, and notwithstanding our faith in the narrator's veracity, we can not at times quite repress a latent suspicion that he is describing *ore rotundo*, or indulging in a little lively fanfaronade, with an occasional dash of Sindbad the Sailor or the mendacious Munchausen.



He tells us, for example, of oxen as tall as elephants; of pheasants and mastiffs as large respectively as peacocks and donkeys; of bats and boars as big as goshawks and buffaloes; of serpents with eyes "bigger than a loaf of bread;" of palaces with floors of solid gold two fingers in thickness; of rubies a palm in length, and thick as a man's arm; of rivers hot enough to boil eggs, and of bamboos that explode with a report that might be heard a distance of ten miles! In more than one description of a battle he romances in the following or a similar strain: "Now you might behold the arrows fly from this side and from that, so that the sky was canopied with them, and they fell like rain! Now might you see knights and men-at-arms on this side and on that fall in numbers from their horses, so that the soil was covered with their bodies! From this side and from that rose such a cry from the wounded and the dying that God might have thundered and you would not have heard!"

Some biographers, in instituting a comparison between Polo and Columbus, have not hesitated to give the preference to the former. Ramusio, comparing the land journey of the one with the sea-voyage of the other, not without some degree of plausibility, observes: "Consider only what a height of courage was needed to undertake and carry through so difficult an enterprise over a route of such desperate length and hardship (requiring three years and a half for its completion), whereon it was sometimes necessary to carry food for the supply of man and beast not for days only, but for months together. Columbus, on the other hand, going by sea, readily carried with him all necessary provision, and after a voyage of some thirty or forty days was conveyed by the wind whither he desired to go." He then concludes with the statement that while "no one from Europe has dared to repeat the former, ships in countless numbers continue to retrace the voyage of the latter." Polo, no doubt, was the worthy precursor of Columbus, whose imagination he fired with visions of the boundless wealth of the Orient, and who subsequently, in seeking a western passage to Asia, discovered America, though he died in the firm belief that he had reached the coast of Cathay. Still, we fail to find in the Venetian traveler the pronounced convictions and noble purpose, the firm resolve and lofty genius, that have challenged for the Genoese admiral so conspicuous a place upon "Fame's eternal bead-roll."

Nevertheless Marco Polo must be regarded as the "prince of medieval travelers," a proud position, which Colonel Yule has so ably vindicated for his hero in his eloquent peroration that we can not forbear, in closing this inadequate sketch, from quoting it at length. "He was the first traveler to

trace a route across the whole longitude of Asia, naming and describing kingdom after kingdom which he had seen with his own eyes; the deserts of Persia, the flowering plateaux and wild gorges of Badakhshan, the jade-bearing rivers of Khotan, the Mongolian steppes—cradle of the power that had so lately threatened to swallow up Christendom—the new and brilliant court that had been established at Cambaluc; the first traveler to reveal China in all its wealth and vastness, its mighty rivers, its huge cities, its rich manufactures, its swarming population, the inconceivably vast fleets that quickened its seas and its inland waters; to tell us of the nations on its borders, with all their eccentricities of manners and worship; of Thibet, with all its sordid devotees; of Burma, with its golden pagodas and their tinkling crowns; of Laos, of Siam, of Cochin China, of Japan, the Eastern Thule, with its rosy pearls and golden-roofed palaces; the first to speak of that museum of beauty and wonder still so imperfectly ransacked—the Indian Archipelago, source of those aromatics then so highly prized, and whose origin was so dark; of Java, the pearl of islands; of Sumatra, with its many kings, its strange, costly products, and its cannibal races; of the naked savages of Nicobar and Andaman; of Ceylon, the isle of gems, with its sacred mountain and the tomb of Adam; of India the Great, not as a dream-land of Alexandrian fables, but as a country seen and partially explored, with its virtuous Brahmans, its obscene ascetics, its diamonds and the strange tales of their acquisition, its seabeds of pearl, and its powerful sun; the first in medieval times to give any distinct account of the secluded Christian empire of Abyssinia, and the semi-Christian island of Socotra; to speak, though indeed dimly, of Zanzibar, with its negroes and its ivory, and of the vast and distant Madagascar, bordering on the dark ocean of the south, with its Rukh and other monstrosities; and, in a remotely opposite region, of Siberia and the Arctic Ocean, of dog sledges, white bears, and reindeer-riding Tunguses."

### CONTRAST.

THE exquisite charm of spring's first ringing laughter  
 We measure only by the winter's gloom;  
 The wailing winds, the whirling snows, make room  
 In our half-frozen hearts for sunshine after!  
 If every morn were fair and all days golden,  
 And only emerald turf our footsteps trod,  
 Our sated souls would tire of velvet sod,  
 Our eyes in spells of snow-capped peaks beholden!  
 We gauge the flow'ret's beauty by the mould  
 That lies so long and dark its sweetness over;  
 As absence makes his rapture for the lover,  
 Who sees no light till he fond eyes behold.  
 So God be praised for wintry blasts and snows,  
 That end their lessons when the violet blows!