

indulgence. In addition to my great distance from the printer, circumstances rendered it necessary to send the first sheets to the press many months before the later sections were ready; and thus it has been impossible to give the whole work a consistent revision.

Several kind friends have taken trouble in making references for me, or in answering questions bearing on the work. I beg all to accept my warm thanks; but I will only name here Mr. Major and Mr. Markham, who have also in turn been good enough to see the revised proofs through the press.

I trust that my own labour, which has been considerable, may not have been in vain. I have tried to present pretty fully one special aspect of a great subject which in all ages has had a peculiar fascination. We can see that the ancients felt something of this charm attaching to the dim legends which reached them across the length of Asia about the *SERES* dwelling in secluded peace and plenty on the shores of the Eastern Ocean. The vast multiplication of manuscripts and translations of Polo and Odoric, and of Odoric's plunderer Mandeville, shows how medieval Christendom experienced the same attraction in the tales which those travellers related of the vast population, riches, arts, and orderly civilisation of *CATHAY*. The charm rekindled when the Portuguese discoveries revealed *CHINA*, and many marvelled with an eccentric Jesuit why God had bestowed such bounties on a hive of pagans;¹ a charm which nearly three centuries of

¹ "Cur Deus tot bonis infidelem sibi Chinam beaverit?"
Kircher, China Illustrata, p. 165.