

for it has prevailed to our own day among their neighbours in parts of Asia most remote from each other.<sup>1</sup> The silk, silk-stuffs, and furs of China preserve their fame to our own day also; and their iron to which Pliny assigns the palm was probably that fine cast-iron, otherwise unknown to the ancients, which is still one of the distinguishing manufactures of China.<sup>2</sup>

15. Of actual diplomatic communication with the Seres I believe there is only one obscure trace in Roman history; this is in the representation of the historian Florus that among the numerous missions from remote nations that sought the footstool of Augustus there came envoys also from the Seres.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thus Wood quotes the testimony regarding the Chinese of a travelled Mullah in Badakshan: "Like every other native of those countries with whom I conversed on the subject, he praised their probity and good faith" (p. 279). Burnes heard that "their commercial regulations are just and equitable. The word of a Chinese is not doubted, nor does the tea ever differ from the sample" (iii, 195). And on the remote frontier of Burma and Siam, "all the travellers whose journals I have consulted speak in unconscious unison of the bitter feeling with which the Burmese are regarded by all the alien tribes which are in any way subject to their authority. And they speak with a like unanimity of the high character which was ascribed to the Chinese for justice, moderation, and good faith" (*On Geog. of Burma, etc.*, in *J. R. G. S.*, xxvii).

<sup>2</sup> "Ex omnibus autem generibus palma Serico ferro est. Seres hoc cum vestibis suis pellibusque mittunt" (xxxiv, 41). "We found cast-iron pots and pans of remarkable quality to form a chief item among the miscellaneous "notions" (apart from the silk which is the staple) imported by the Chinese into Ava by the Yunan Road. The art of iron casting is, like most Chinese arts, a very old one; and we find that in the first century B.C. the people of Tawan or Farghana acquired the new art of casting iron tools and utensils from Chinese deserters (*Julien*, quoted by *Lassen*, ii, 615). There is mention of Chinese iron in a passage of the Arabian geographer Ibn Khurdadbah, quoted below (§ 83).

<sup>3</sup> "Even the rest of the nations of the world which were not subject to the imperial sway were sensible of its grandeur, and looked with reverence to the Roman people, the great conqueror of nations. Thus even Scythians and Sarmatians sent envoys to seek the friendship of Rome. Nay the Seres came likewise, and the Indians who dwelt beneath the vertical sun, bringing presents of precious stones and pearls and elephants, but thinking all of less moment than the vastness of the journey which they had undertaken, and which they said had occupied four years. In truth it needed but to look at their complexion to see that they were people of another world than ours. The Parthians also, as if repenting for their presumption in defeating the Romans, spontaneously brought