

cities of the first class. The coinage is stated to be of gold and silver, ten pieces of silver making the value of one piece of gold.¹ There follows a variety of what read to us as vague or puerile notices of the constitution and productions of the country, including, however, a detailed and apparently correct enough account of the coral fisheries of the Mediterranean.²

32. In the annals of the Thang we are told that the country formerly called Tathsin has in later days been called FULIN (πόλιν, =Byzantium, see Note to Ibn Batuta, p. 402, *infra*). Many of the trivialities in the older accounts of Tathsin are repeated, with some circumstances that are new. And among the peculiarities ascribed by the Chinese to the Roman empire it is curious to recognise not a few that nearly or entirely coincide with things that have been described by ancient or mediæval writers as peculiarities of China, or the adjoining countries. Such are the eminently peaceful and upright character of the people; the great number of cities and contiguous succession of populated places; horse-posts; the provision made for the conveyance and maintenance of foreign ambassadors; the abundance of gold and gems, among which are some in the form of tablets that shine in the dark;³ pearls generated from the saliva of golden pheasants (!), tortoise-shell, rare perfumed essences, asbestos stuffs that are cleaned by fire, cloths of gold brocade and damask silk; remarkable capons, rhinoceroses, lions, and vegetative lambs.⁴ Jugglers and conjurors are also seen who perform amazing things.⁵

miles); but this is evidently a mistake for 10,000, as given in another extract at p. 43.

¹ In the Byzantine coinage, however, *twelve* of the ordinary silver coin (*miliaresion*) went to the piece of gold (*nomisma*).

² Pauthier de l'Auth., 34-40; Klap., p. 68.

³ Benjamin of Tudela says that the lustre of the diamonds on the emperor's crown at Byzantium was such as to illumine the room in which they were kept (p. 75).

⁴ The obscure extracts in Pauthier (*op. cit.*, pp. 39, 47), as to certain lambs found to the north of the kingdoms dependent on Fulin, which grow out of the ground, and are attached by the navel to the soil, appear to refer to the stories of the Lamb-Plant of the Wolga countries (see *Odoric*, p. 144), and not, as Pauthier supposes, to the fat-tailed sheep of Western Asia.

⁵ See traces of this juggling skill in a passage of one Italian version of