

nations was less impeded by artificial obstacles than it has been at any other period of history. For even now, though our war-steamers have ascended the Kiang to Hankow, and a post runs from Peking to Petersburg, every land frontier excepting that towards Russia remains as impervious as in the darkest age of the past.

It was in the days of the Mongols also that China first became really known to Europe, and that by a name which, though especially applied to the northern provinces, also came to bear a more general application, CATHAY.¹

89. This name, KHITAI, is that by which China is styled to this day by all, or nearly all, the nations which know it from an inland point of view, including the Russians, the Persians, and the nations of Turkestan; and yet it originally belonged to a people who were not Chinese at all. The KHITANS were a people of Manchu race who inhabited for centuries a country to the north-east of China, lying east of the Khingan mountains and north of the river Sira, and whose allegiance was rendered alternately to the Khakans of the Turks and the Emperors of China. In the beginning of the tenth century the chief of one of their tribes made himself supreme, first over his own entire race, and then successively over the adjoining nations of Asia from the sea of Corea to the Altai. The son of this conqueror having assisted to place on the throne Kaotsu of the brief dynasty of the later Tçin, this prince in return not only transferred to the Tartar a large tract of Northern China, but agreed to pay him yearly tribute, and to acknowledge his supremacy. The next Chinese sovereign kicking against these degradations, the Khitan over-ran all the provinces north of the Yellow River, and established his own empire within them, under the name of *Leao* or the Iron Dynasty. This Khitan empire subsisted for two centuries, in Northern China and the adjoining regions of Tartary. The

¹ Several names strongly resembling *Cathay* appear in ancient geographers; but, of course, none of them have any connexion with the name as applied to China. The *Xaïrai* Scythians of Ptolemy probably represent *Khotan* (vi, 15). The *Kaθέα* of Strabo is in the Punjab, apparently from what he says, including the Salt Range (Bk. xv). The *Kataia* of Arrian is the island of Kísh in the Persian Gulf.