

114. Except the brief and fabulous stories of Chin and Machin, which Athanasius Nikitin picked up in the ports of Western India (1468-1474) I am not aware of any other European notices of China previous to the voyages of Columbus and De Gama. The former, it is scarcely needful to say, in his great enterprise was seeking no new continent but a shorter route to the Cathay and Cipangu of Marco Polo, and died believing that the countries which he had discovered were the eastern skirts of Asia, a belief which was not extinct for some twenty years and more after his death.<sup>1</sup>

115. The Portuguese first visited a port of China in 1514, and the adventurers on this occasion sold their goods to great profit though they were not allowed to land. In 1517 took place the trading expedition to Canton under Andrada, carrying the unfortunate ambassador Perez, who died in fetters in China.<sup>2</sup>

116. With this event, perhaps, our sketch ought to conclude. But it was a good many years longer before China was familiarly known from the seaward access, and with the revived interest in

<sup>1</sup> In a letter, *De Orbis Situ ac Descriptione*, from a certain Franciscan Friar Francis, addressed to the Archbishop of Palermo, which is attached to some copies of the *Peregrinatio Joannis Hesei* (Antwerp., 1565), the city of "Themistetan" or Mexico is identified with the Quinsai of Marco Polo, Hispaniola with Cipangu, and so forth.

<sup>2</sup> This last is generally stated as the first Portuguese expedition to China. But the former one is noticed by Andrew Corsalis in his letter to Duke Lorenzo de' Medici, dated 6th January, 1515 (*Ramusio*, i, ff., 180, 181): "The merchants of the land of China also make voyages to Malacca across the Great Gulf to get cargoes of spices, and bring from their own country musk, rhubarb, pearls, tin, porcelain, and silk and wrought stuffs of all kinds, such as damasks, satins, and brocades of extraordinary richness. For they are people of great skill, and on a par with ourselves (*di nostra qualità*), but of uglier aspect, with little bits of eyes. They dress very much after our fashion, and wear shoes and stockings (*? scarpe e calciamenti*) like ourselves. I believe them to be pagans, though many allege that they hold our faith or some part of it. During this last year some of our Portuguese made a voyage to China. They were not permitted to land; for they say 'tis against their custom to let foreigners enter their dwellings. But they sold their goods at a great gain, and they say there is as great profit in taking spices to China as in taking them to Portugal; for 'tis a cold country and they make great use of them. It will be five hundred leagues from Malacca to China, sailing north."