

NOTE XIV.

EXTRACT FROM THE HISTORY OF HAYTON THE
ARMENIAN.

(Written in 1307.)

"Of the Kingdom of Cathay.

"The empire of Cathay is the greatest that you will find on the face of the earth, and it abounds with population, and has wealth without end. It is situated on the shore of the Ocean Sea. And there are in that quarter so many islands in the sea that there is no knowing their number. For no man is to be found in existence who shall venture to say that he hath seen all those islands. But such of them as are attainable are found to have an infinite store of riches.

"That which is reckoned well-nigh the most costly article that you can purchase in those parts is oil of olive, and when any such oil finds its way thither by any means the kings and nobles treasure it with the greatest care as if it were some princely salve.

"There are in that kingdom of Cathay more marvellous and singular things than in any other kingdom of the world. The people of the country are exceedingly full of shrewdness and sagacity, and hold in contempt the performances of other nations in every kind of art and science. They have indeed a saying to the effect that they alone see with two eyes, whilst the Latins see with one, and all other nations are blind! By this you may easily gather that they look on all other nations as quite uncivilised in comparison with themselves. And in good sooth there is such a vast variety of articles of marvellous and unspeakable delicacy and elaboration of workmanship brought from those parts, that there is really no other people that can be compared with them in such matters.

"All the people of that empire are called Cathayans, but they have also other names according to the special nation to which they belong. You will find many among them, both men and women, who are very handsome, but as a general rule they have all small eyes, and nature gives them no beard. These Cathayans have a very elegant written character, which in beauty in some sort resembles the Latin letters. It were hard to enumerate all the sects of Gentiles in that empire, for there be some who worship idols of metal; others who worship oxen because these plough the ground which produces wheat and the other fruits of the earth; others who worship great trees of different kinds; some who devote themselves to astronomy and the worship of nature; others who adore the sun or the moon; and others again who have neither creed nor laws but lead a mere animal life like brute beasts. And though these people have the acutest intelligence in all matters wherein material