

the Tartar's ambassador who arrived from those parts when I was at Tana. Being with him one day and our talk running on this Cathay, he told me that after passing the places that have been mentioned, as soon as he had entered the country of Cathay all his expenses were provided stage by stage until he arrived at a city called CAMBALU. And there he was honourably received, and had an apartment provided for him. And he said that all the merchants who go that way have their expenses provided in the same manner. He was then conducted to where the sovereign was, and when he came in front of the gate he was obliged to kneel down outside. The place was a level, very broad and long; and at the far end of it there was a stone pavement, on which the prince was seated on a chair with his back turned towards the gate. On the two sides there were four persons sitting with their faces towards the gate and from the gate to the place where those four were there was on each side a row of mace bearers standing with silver sticks, leaving, as it were, a path between them, and all along this were interpreters sitting on their heels as the women do with us here. The ambassador accordingly having been brought to the gate, where he found things arranged as we have described, was desired to say what his object was. And so having delivered his message it was passed from hand to hand by the interpreters till the explanation reached the prince, or at least those four who sat at the top. Answer was then made that he was welcome, and that he might return to his quarters where the official reply would be delivered to him. And thus there was no more need for him to return to the prince, but only to confer with some of his people who were sent to the ambassador's house for the purpose; reference being made in this quarter or that, as occasion arose; and so the business was despatched in a very prompt and pleasant manner. One of the servants of this ambassador, and also a son of his, both of whom had been with him in Cathay, told me wonderful things of the justice that was done there. . . . And they said that not only in the city but anywhere outside of it where travellers pass, if anything should be found under a stone or elsewhere that a traveller has dropt, no one would dare to take it up and appropriate it. And, moreover, if one going along the road is asked by some one whom he regards with suspicion, or does not put much trust in, where he is going; and if he go and make complaint of this question, then the person who put it must give some good and lawful reason for asking, otherwise he will be punished. And so you may easily perceive that this is a city of liberty and great justice.

“As regards the disposal of merchandise, I have heard that all the merchants who arrive in those parts carry their goods to certain *fonteghi*, and those whose duty it is then go and see them, and if there is anything that the sovereign would like to have they take it at their option, giving in exchange articles of greater value. The rest remains at the disposal of the merchant. For small dealings there they use money of