

"On the public square at Campion every day there gather a number of charlatans who practise the art of *Simia*, and by means of it, in the middle of crowds of people, they will exhibit all sorts of wonders; for example they will take a man who accompanies them and cleave him through with a sword, or cut his arm off, and you'll see him all streaming with blood, and so forth."<sup>1</sup> (From the "*Esposizione* of *M. Giov. Batt. Ramusio*, prefixed to the travels of Marco Polo, in the II vol. of the *Navigazioni e Viaggi*," f. 14 vers. to f. 16 vers.)

## NOTE XIX.

ACCOUNT OF CATHAY BY A TURKISH DERVISH, AS  
RELATED TO AUGER GISLEN DE BUSBECK.

(Circa 1560.)

"Now let me tell you what I heard about the city and country of CATHAY from a certain Turkish vagabond. He was one of that kind of sect whose devotion consists in wandering into the most distant countries, and in worshipping God in the loftiest mountains and in the wildest deserts. This fellow had rambled over well-nigh the whole Eastern World, and among other things he mentioned that he had come across the Portuguese. Then he was seized with a strong desire to see the city and kingdom of Cathay, and for that purpose attached himself to a company of merchants who were going thither. For it is their custom to join together in large numbers, and to travel to the frontiers of that empire in a company. There is no passage for a small party that way, or at least it is very unsafe; for there are a number of treacherous tribes upon the way whose attacks the travellers have to dread at every moment. When they have got some distance from the Persian frontier they come to the cities of SAMMARCAND, BORCHARA, TASCHAN, and other places occupied by the successors of Demirlan.<sup>2</sup> After these there are extensive deserts and inhabited countries, some occupied by savage and inhospitable tribes, others by people of more civilised character, but everywhere scantily supplied with food and forage, so that everyone has to take his victuals and other necessities along with him, and this involves a large number of camels to carry the loads. Such large companies of men and beasts they call *caravans*. After a fatiguing journey of many months they came to a defile which forms, as it were, the barrier gate of Cathay. For a great part of that empire consists of inland country, and here there was an inclosing chain of rugged and precipitous mountains, affording no passage except through a narrow strait

<sup>1</sup> See *Ibn Batuta*, infra, p. 500.<sup>2</sup> *Bokhara; Tashkand; Tamerlane.*