

in which a garrison was stationed on the king's part.¹ There the question is put to the merchants, 'What they bring, whence they come, and how many of them are there?' The answer being given, the king's guards pass it by signal—by smoke if in daylight, by fire if by night—to the next watch-tower; they to the next, and so on, till in a few hours the message reaches the king at Cathay: a thing which would by any other communication require many days.² The king sends back his orders in the same manner and with equal rapidity, saying whether all shall be admitted, or only a part, or the whole put off. If they are allowed to enter they proceed under charge of certain leaders, finding halting-places arranged at proper distances where everything needed for food or clothing is to be had at reasonable rates, until they reach Cathay itself. On arriving there they have each to declare what they bring, and then they make a complimentary present to the king, as each thinks fit. He, however, is accustomed to pay for what he wants at a fair price.³ The rest of their goods they sell or barter, a day being appointed for their return, up to which they have full liberty to do business. For the people of Cathay do not approve of the prolonged stay of foreigners among them, lest their indigenous manners should be corrupted by some foreign infection. And so the merchants are sent back stage by stage along the same road that they followed in coming.

"This wanderer stated that they were a people of extraordinary accomplishments, highly civilised and polite in their mode of living, and had a religion of their own, which was neither Christian, Jewish, nor Mahomedan, but except as regards ceremonies came nearest to the Jewish. For many centuries past the art of printing has been in use among them, and books printed with types, which he had seen there, sufficiently proved the fact. For this they made use of paper made from the slough and envelopes of silkworms, which was so thin that it bore the impression of the types on one side only, whilst the other side was left blank.⁴

"There were many taverns in that city. . . .⁵ The odour of the perfume called musk, which is the exudation of a certain little animal about as big as a kid. Nothing fetched so great a price among them as

¹ *Supra*, p. ccii.

² *Infra*, p. 138-9.

³ *Supra*, p. cv.

⁴ This is well known as a characteristic of Chinese printing. Paper in China is made from bamboo, from the bark of mulberry, of a *hibiscus* (*Rosa Sinensis*), and of a tree called *chu* (*Broussonetia Papyrifera*). "All bark paper is strong and tough; it has rays crossing it, so that when torn you would think it was made of silk fibres. This is why it is called *Mien-chi* or silk paper" (Chinese author translated by *Julien*—see *Chine Moderne*, pp. 622 *seqq.*). Duhalde, however, does mention a kind of paper made from "the cods the silk-worms spin" (ext. in *Astley*, iv, p. 158).

⁵ An unindicated hiatus in the original.