

things and many more are done in that lord's presence. And any account that one can give of the magnificence of that lord, and of the things that are done in his court must seem incredible to those who have not witnessed it.

But no one need wonder at his being able to maintain such an expenditure; for there is nothing spent as money in his whole kingdom but certain pieces of paper which are there current as money, whilst an infinite amount of treasure comes into his hands.

43. Concerning a certain melon that produceth a beast like a lamb.

Another passing marvellous thing may be related, which however I saw not myself, but heard from trustworthy persons. For 'tis said that in a certain great kingdom called CADELI there be mountains called the CASPEAN Mountains, on which are said to grow certain very large melons. And when these be ripe, they burst, and a little beast is found inside like a small lamb, so that they have both melons and meat! And though some, peradventure, may find that hard to believe, yet it may be quite true; just as it is true that there be in Ireland trees which produce birds.¹ [And here I

¹ The myth of the bernacle geese to which Odoric here refers, and for which he was perhaps indebted to his travelling companion the Irish Friar James, came down to a comparatively recent period in full credit, and even Sir Thomas Brown only ventures to "awake considerations...whether the story be not too much enlarged." The curious history of its origin has been explained by Professor Max Müller in a lecture on mythology.

But the story of the Tartar lamb was also familiar in the seventeenth century, much as that of the sea serpent is now. A full account may be read in J. C. Scaliger. "It is found," he says, "in the lands of the noble Tartar horde called Zavolha. The seed is like that of a melon, but the plant, which is called *Borametz* or the Lamb, grows to the height of about three feet in the form of that animal, with feet, hoofs, ears, etc., complete, only having in lieu of horns two curly locks of hair. If wounded it bleeds; wolves are greedily fond of it; if well grown round with juicy herbage the plant thrives like a lamb in fat pastures; if the grass be cleared away it pines and dies," etc.

Sir T. Brown, after a description which seems to be derived from this of Scaliger's, adds: "And yet, if all this be no more than the shape of a