

able place to introduce some account of the personage whose name of Prester John is so constantly recurring in the narratives of that age.

The first notice of a potentate so styled appears to have been brought to Europe by the Syrian Bishop of Gabala who came in 1145 as envoy from the King of Armenia to Pope Eugene III. For he reported that not long before a certain John, inhabiting the extreme east, king and Nestorian priest, and claiming descent from the three wise kings, had made war on the King of the Medes and Persians, and had taken Ecbatana his capital. He was then proceeding with his army to Jerusalem, but was stopped by the Tigris which he could not cross, etc.<sup>1</sup> We shall see hereafter what facts appear to lie at the bottom of these rumours of a conquering christian prince in Central Asia in the first half of the twelfth century. But the Nestorians probably were glad to catch at a story which raised the importance of their sect, whilst the Catholics also greeted with joy this intelligence of a counterpoise to the Mahomedan power rising in a quarter so unexpected.

<sup>1</sup> “Vidimus etiam ibi tunc prætaxatum de Syria Gabulensem episcopum . . . . Narrabat etiam quod ante non multos annos Joannes quidam (qui ultra Persidem et Armeniam in extremo oriente habitans, rex et sacerdos, cum gente suâ Christianus est sed Nestorianus) Persarum et Medorum reges fratres Samiardos dictos, bello petierit, atque Ecbatani . . . . sedem regni eorum expugnaverit. Cui dum præfati reges cum Persarum Medorum et Assyriorum copiis occurserent, triduo utrisque mori magis quam fugere volentibus dimicatum est, PRESBYTER JOANNES (*sic enim eum nominare solent*) tandem versis in fugam Persis, cruentissimâ cæde victor extitit. Post hanc victoriam dicebat prædictum Joannem ad auxilium Hierosolymitanæ Ecclesiæ procinctum movisse, sed dum ad Tygrim venisset, ibique nullo vehiculo traducere exercitum potuisset, ad septentrionalem plagam, ubi eundem amnem hyemali glacie congelari didicerat, iter flexisse. Ibi dum per aliquot annos moratus gelu expectaret, sed minime hoc impediente aeris temperie obtineret, multos ex insueto cœlo de exercitu amittens, ad propria redire compulsus est. Fertur enim iste de antiquâ progenie illorum, quorum in Evangelio mentio fit, esse Magorum, eisdemque quibus et isti gentibus imperans, tantâ gloriâ et abundantiâ frui, ut non nisi sceptro smaragdino uti dicatur. Patrum itaque suorum, qui in cunabulis Christum adorare venerunt, accensus exemplo, Hierosolymam iter proposuerat, sed prætaxata causa impeditum fuisse asserunt. Sed hæc hactenus.”—Ottonis Frisingensis Chronicon, lib. vii, cap. 33, in *Germanic. Historic. Illust. etc., Christiani Urstisii Basiliensis, Francofurdi, 1585.*