

NO. VIII. LETTER FROM PASCAL OF VITTORIA, A MISSIONARY FRANCISCAN IN TARTARY, TO HIS BRETHREN OF THE CONVENT OF VITTORIA, 1338.

Dearly beloved fathers, your sanctities are aware that when I quitted you I proceeded to Avignon in company with the dear father Friar Gonsalvo Transtorna. Thence we went, with the blessing of the reverend the general, to get the benefit of the Indulgence at Assisi; and after that we embarked at Venice on board a certain carrack, and sailed down the Adriatic sea. We next sailed through the sea of Pontus,¹ leaving Sclavonia to the left and Turkey to the right, and landed in Greece at Galata near Constantinople, where we found the father Vicar of Cathay in the Vicariat of the East. Then, embarking on another vessel, we sailed across the Black Sea,² whose depth is unfathomable, to Gazaria³ in the Vicariat of the North, and in the empire of the Tartars. Then traversing another sea which has no bottom,⁴ we landed at TANA.

And having got thither sooner than my comrade, I found my way with some Greeks by waggons as far as SARRAY;⁵ martyrdom, whereas if 1323 were meant the time would really be considerably under two years.

¹ The Propontis or Sea of Marmora, is what he calls Mare Ponticum. It is curious to find the country so near the capital of the empire called *Sclavonia*.

² "*Mare nigrum*."

³ The Gazaria of Rubruquis is precisely the Crimea, but I believe the term sometimes is extended towards the Don.

⁴ A curiously erroneous notion of the Palus Mæotis. *Tana* is Azov.

⁵ *Sarai*, the capital of the Khans of Kapchak, founded by Batu, stood on the left bank of the Achtuba or northern branch of the Wolga. Pallas describes the remains of *two* cities on the river mentioned, one not far below its bifurcation from the main Wolga on a salt and sterile plain called Zarefpod, about two hundred and forty miles from the Caspian, the other at Selitrennoi Gorodok, much further down. The latter position seems more consistent with Pegolotti's statement that you could go from Gittarchan to Sarai in one day (even supposing that Gittarchan or old Astracan was somewhat higher than the present city), and also with the statements of Arabian geographers that Sarai was only two days from the