

KAGON, i.e. to the Sand Hills thrown up by the wind. Before the days of the Tartars nobody believed that the earth was habitable beyond these, nor indeed was it believed that there was any country at all beyond. But the Tartars by God's permission, and with wonderful exertion, did cross them, and found themselves in what the philosophers call the torrid and impassable zone:¹ Pass it however the Tartars did; and so did I, and that twice. 'Tis of this that David speaketh in the Psalms, '*Posuit desertum,*' &c.² After having passed it we came to CAMBALEC, the chief seat of the Empire of the East. Of its incredible magnitude, population, and military array, we will say nothing.³ But the Grand Kaam, when he beheld the great horses, and the Pope's presents, with his letter, and King Robert's too, with their golden seals, and when he saw us also, rejoiced greatly, being delighted, yea exceedingly delighted with everything,

¹ It is not quite clear whether he intends that *Cyollos Kagon* (or *Kagan* in Ven. MS.) signifies Sandhills. Their position is evidently to be sought on the northern verge of the Gobi, which is his Torrid Zone, and probably among those to the north-east of Kamil. Hereabouts indeed, in a Chinese work on Turkestan, we find repeated mention of the *Sha-Shan* or "Sand Mountains," from which flows one source of the Barkul Nur, north of Kamil. (See *Julien* in *N. Ann. des Voyages*, 1846, iii, 37-44.) One of the reports translated in *The Russians in Central Asia* (London, 1865, p. 111), speaking of the desert says: "From this region (about Yarkand) it gradually widens as it runs eastward, where it forms the vast Gobi, devoid of all vegetation...where the sand is heaped up in such lofty ridges that the inhabitants give them the name of '*Gag*' (mountain)." If this be no misprint we have here perhaps one element of the name used by Marignolli, and in the Turkish and Persian *Chúl*, a desert, written by Vambéry *Tchöl* and *Tchöle*, we have perhaps the other.

² "*Posuit Desertum in stagna*" (Ps. cvi, our cvii, 35). Probably his twice having past the Torrid Zone is explained rightly by Meinert's suggestion that Marignolli regarded the Syrian Desert, which he crossed on his return to Europe, as only another part of the same belt of desolation. That the Torrid Zone was uninhabitable was maintained, as is well known, by Aristotle and many other philosophers.

³ The author's expression is, "*de cujus magnitudine incredibili et populo, ordine militum sileatur,*" of which I greatly doubt my having given a correct interpretation.