

IBN BATUTA'S TRAVELS IN BENGAL AND CHINA.

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

ABU-ABDULLAH MAHOMED, called Ibn Batuta,¹ The Traveller (*par excellence*) of the Arab nation, as he was hailed by a saint of his religion whom he visited in India, was born at Tangier on the 24th February, 1304.

The duty of performing the Mecca pilgrimage must have developed the travelling propensity in many a Mahomedan, whilst in those days the power and extension of the vast freemasonry to which he belonged would give facilities in the indulgence of this propensity such as have never been known under other circumstances to any class of people.² Ibn Batuta himself tells us how in the heart of China he fell in with a certain Al Bushri,³ a countryman of his own from Ceuta, who had risen to great wealth and prosperity in that far country, and how at a later date (when after a short visit to his native land the restless man had started to explore Central Africa), in passing through Segelmessa, on the border of the Sahara, he was the guest of the same Al Bushri's brother.⁴ "What an enormous distance lay between

¹ During his travels in the East he bore the name of Shamsuddín (i, 8).

² Ricold Montecroce is greatly struck with the brotherly feeling among Mahomedans of his day, however strange to one another in blood: "Nam etiam loquendo ad invicem, maxime ad extraneos dicit unus alteri: 'O fili matris meæ!' Ipsi etiam nec occidunt se ad invicem nec expoliant, sed homo Sarracenus securissime transit inter quoscunque extraneos et barbaros Sarracenos" (*Pereg. Quatuor.*, p. 134).

³ iv, 282. Similar references indicate the French edition and version by Defrémery and Sanguinetti, from which I have translated.

⁴ iv, 377.