

fourth city, where the seat of the government is, and also the palace of the great Amír Kurtai. When we had passed the gate of the town my companions left me, and I was received by the Wazír, who conducted me to the palace of the great Amír Kurtai. I have already related how this latter took from me the pelisse which had been given me by the Friend of God, Jalaluddin of Shíráz. This fourth town is intended solely for the dwellings of the emperor's officers and slaves; it is the finest of all the six towns, and is traversed by three streams of water. One of these is a canal from the great river, and by it the supplies of food and of stones for burning are brought in small boats; there are also pleasure boats to be had upon it. The citadel is in the middle of the town; it is of immense extent, and in the centre of it is the palace of the government. The citadel surrounds this on all sides, and is provided with covered sheds, where artizans are seen employed in making magnificent dresses, arms, and engines of war. The Amír Kurtai told me that there were 1,600 master workmen, each of whom had under his direction three or four apprentices. All are the Kán's slaves; they are chained, and live outside the fortress. They are allowed to frequent the bazars of the town, but not to go beyond the gate. The Amír musters them daily, and if any one is missing their chief is responsible. It is customary to remove their fetters after ten years' service, and they have then the option of either continuing to serve without fetters or of going where they will, provided they do not pass beyond the frontier of the Kán's territory. At the age of fifty they are excused all further work, and are maintained at the cost of the State. But indeed in any case every one, or nearly every one, in China, who has reached that age, may obtain his maintenance at the public expense.¹ He who has reached the age of sixty is regarded by the Chinese as a child, and is no longer subject to the penalties of the law. Old

¹ See above, p. 240, and M. Polo, i, 39.