

VII.

THE JOURNEY OF BENEDICT GOËS FROM AGRA
TO CATHAY.

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

THE traveller whom we are now about to follow over one of the most daring journeys in the whole history of discovery, belongs to a very different period from those who have preceded him in this collection. Since the curtain fell on Ibn Batuta's wanderings two hundred and fifty years have passed away. After long suspension of intercourse with Eastern Asia, the rapid series of discoveries and re-discoveries that followed the successful voyage of De Gama have brought India, the Archipelago, China, and Japan into immediate communication with Europe by sea; the Jesuits have entered on the arena of the forgotten missions of the Franciscans, and have rapidly spread their organisation over the east, and to the very heart of each great eastern empire, to the courts of Agra, Peking, and Miako. Cathay has not been altogether forgotten in Europe, as many bold English enterprises by sea, and some by land, during the sixteenth century, testify; but to those actually engaged in the labours of commerce and religion in the Indies it remains probably but as a name connected with the fables of Italian poets, or with the tales deemed nearly as fabulous of old romancing travellers. The intelligence of the accomplished men, indeed, who formed the Jesuit forelorn in Northern China, soon led them to identify the great empire in which they were labouring, with that Cathay of which their countryman Marco had