

those people is called *Mussau*), and there are also some Mahomedans. But is the king a Mahomedan? asked Akbar. Not yet, said the merchant, but it is hoped that he will soon be so. The colloquy was then interrupted, the sovereign graciously naming another day for the reception of the merchant, in order to ask further questions about this empire. But Xavier getting impatient, out of eagerness to learn more, went to see the merchant in order to get more precise information about the religion of the inhabitants. The merchant repeated his statement that they were, for the most part, Christians, and that he had been on terms of great intimacy with several of them. They had temples, some of them of vast size, in which were images both painted and sculptured, and among others figures of the crucified Saviour, which were held by them in great reverence. A priest was set over every temple, who was treated with great respect by the people, and received presents from them. . . . He also mentioned the continence of those priests, and the schools in which they brought up young people for holy orders. . . . The fathers moreover wore black frocks, and caps like Xavier's, only a little bigger. In saluting any one by the way they did not uncover, but joined hands across the breast, interlacing the fingers. . . . The king often went to the temples, and must, therefore, be a Christian," etc., etc.

Xavier lost no time in communicating this intelligence to the Provincial of his Order; and after arriving with the king at Agra sent the results of further inquiry made there from persons who had been to Cathay. Some people alleged that there was a way to Cathay by BENGAL and the kingdom of GARAGHAT,<sup>1</sup> at the ex-

<sup>1</sup> *Ghoraghat* ("the horse-ferry") is a town and zemindari in the Bogra district of Bengal, and is mentioned as such in the *Ayin Akbari*. But the *kingdom* alluded to must be that of *Kúch Bihár*, which in the time of Akbar retained independence, and extended from the Brahmaputra westward to Tirhut, from the Himalya south to Ghoraghat. In 1661 it was conquered by Mir Jumla (see *Hamilton's Gazetteer*, in *vv. Ghoraghat and Cooch Bahar*). Kuch Bihar still exists, with a modified independence, and very much restricted limits. It is remarkable that there should have been any talk of a route to China this way in the reign of Akbar. It probably lay through Lassa. We have seen (*ante*, p. 273) that Rashiduddin recognised an overland route by Bengal and the borders of Tibet.