

growled refusal to all their hints, and but for a happy chance we should have lost our mediæval Herodotus.

21. Arghún Khan of Persia, Kúblái's great-nephew, had in 1286 lost his favourite wife the Khatun Bulughán; and, mourning her sorely, took steps to fulfil her dying injunction that her place should be filled only by a lady of her own kin, the Mongol Tribe of Bayaut. Ambassadors were despatched to the Court of Kaan-baligh to seek such a bride. The message was courteously received, and the choice fell on the lady Kokáchin, a maiden of 17, "*moult bele dame et avenant.*" The overland road from Peking to Tabriz was not only of portentous length for such a tender charge, but was imperilled by war, so the envoys desired to return by sea. Tartars in general were strangers to all navigation; and the envoys, much taken with the Venetians, and eager to profit by their experience, especially as Marco had just then returned from his Indian mission, begged the Kaan as a favour to send the three *Firinghis* in their company. He consented with reluctance, but, having done so, fitted the party out nobly for the voyage, charging the Polos with friendly messages for the potentates of Europe, including the King of England. They appear to have sailed from the port of Zayton (as the Westerns called T'swan-chau or Chin-cheu in Fo-kien) in the beginning of 1292. It was an ill-starred voyage, involving long detentions on the coast of Sumatra, and in the South of India, to which, however, we are indebted for some of the best chapters in the book; and two years or upwards passed before they arrived at their destination in Persia.* The three hardy

Circumstances of the Departure of the Polos from the Kaan's Court.

* Persian history seems to fix the arrival of the lady Kokáchin in the North of Persia to the winter of 1293-1294. The voyage to Sumatra occupied three months (vol. i. p. 34); they were five months detained there (ii. 292); and the remainder of the voyage extended to eighteen more (i. 35),—twenty-six months in all.

The data are too slight for unexceptional precision, but the following adjustment will fairly meet the facts. Say that they sailed from Fo-kien in January 1292. In April they would be in Sumatra, and find the S.W. Monsoon too near to admit of their crossing the Bay of Bengal. They remain in port till September (five months), and then proceed, touching (perhaps) at Ceylon, at Kayal, and at several ports of Western India. In one of these, *e.g.* Kayal or Tana, they pass the S.W. Monsoon of 1293, and then proceed to the Gulf. They reach Hormuz in the winter, and the camp of the Persian Prince Gházán, the son of Arghún, in March, twenty-six months from their departure.

I have been unable to trace Hammer's authority (not Wassáf I find), which