

They applied to him several times for leave to go, presenting their request with great respect, but he had such a partiality for them, and liked so much to have them about him, that nothing on earth would persuade him to let them go.

Now it came to pass in those days that the Queen BOLGANA, wife of ARGON, Lord of the Levant, departed this life. And in her Will she had desired that no Lady should take her place, or succeed her as Argon's wife, except one of her own family [which existed in Cathay]. Argon therefore despatched three of his Barons, by name respectively OULATAY, APUSCA, and COJA, as ambassadors to the Great Kaan, attended by a very gallant company, in order to bring back as his bride a lady of the family of Queen Bolgana, his late wife.²

When these three Barons had reached the Court of the Great Kaan, they delivered their message, explaining wherefore they were come. The Kaan received them with all honour and hospitality, and then sent for a lady whose name was COCACHIN, who was of the family of the deceased Queen Bolgana. She was a maiden of 17, a very beautiful and charming person, and on her arrival at Court she was presented to the three Barons as the Lady chosen in compliance with their demand. They declared that the Lady pleased them well.³

Meanwhile Messer Marco chanced to return from India, whither he had gone as the Lord's ambassador, and made his report of all the different things that he had seen in his travels, and of the sundry seas over which he had voyaged. And the three Barons, having seen that Messer Nicolo, Messer Maffeo, and Messer Marco were not only Latins, but men of marvellous good sense withal, took thought among themselves to get the three to travel with them, their intention being to return to their country by sea, on account of the