

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THE TWO BROTHERS AND MESSER MARCO TOOK LEAVE OF THE GREAT KAAH, AND RETURNED TO THEIR OWN COUNTRY.

AND when the Prince saw that the Two Brothers and Messer Marco were ready to set forth, he called them all three to his presence, and gave them two golden Tablets of Authority, which should secure them liberty of passage through all his dominions, and by means of which, whithersoever they should go, all necessaries would be provided for them, and for all their company, and whatever they might choose to order.¹ He charged them also with messages to the King of France, the King of England,² the King of Spain, and the other kings of Christendom. He then caused thirteen ships to be equipt, each of which had four masts, and often spread twelve sails.³ And I could easily give you all particulars about these, but as it would be so long an affair I will not enter upon this now, but hereafter, when time and place are suitable. [Among the said ships were at least four or five that carried crews of 250 or 260 men.]

And when the ships had been equipt, the Three Barons and the Lady, and the Two Brothers and Messer Marco, took leave of the Great Kaan, and went on board their ships with a great company of people, and with all necessaries provided for two years by the Emperor. They put forth to sea, and after sailing for some three months they arrived at a certain Island towards the South, which is called JAVA,⁴ and in which there are many wonderful things which we shall tell you all about by-and-bye. Quitting this Island they con-