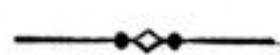


BOOK I.



CHAPTER I.

HERE THE BOOK BEGINS ; AND FIRST IT SPEAKS OF THE LESSER
HERMENIA.

THERE are two Hermenias, the Greater and the Less, The Lesser Hermenia is governed by a certain King, who maintains a just rule in his dominions, but is himself subject to the Tartar.¹ The country contains numerous towns and villages,² and has everything in plenty ; moreover, it is a great country for sport in the chase of all manner of beasts and birds. It is, however, by no means a healthy region, but grievously the reverse.³ In days of old the nobles there were valiant men, and did doughty deeds of arms ; but nowadays they are poor creatures, and good at nought, unless it be at boozing ; they are great at that. Howbeit, they have a city upon the sea, which is called LAYAS, at which there is a great trade. For you must know that all the spicery, and the cloths of silk and gold, and the other valuable wares that come from the interior, are brought to that city. And the merchants of Venice and Genoa, and other countries, come thither to sell their goods, and to buy what they lack. And whatsoever persons would travel to the interior (of the East), merchants or others, they take their way by this city of Layas.⁴