

the people live by trade and handicrafts. 'Tis a very mountainous region, and full of strait defiles and of fortresses, insomuch that the Tartars have never been able to subdue it out and out.

There is in this country a certain Convent of Nuns called St. Leonard's, about which I have to tell you a very wonderful circumstance. Near the church in question there is a great lake at the foot of a mountain, and in this lake are found no fish, great or small, throughout the year till Lent come. On the first day of Lent they find in it the finest fish in the world, and great store too thereof; and these continue to be found till Easter Eve. After that they are found no more till Lent come round again; and so 'tis every year. 'Tis really a passing great miracle!<sup>6</sup>

That sea whereof I spoke as coming so near the mountains is called the Sea of GHEL or GHELAN, and extends about 700 miles.<sup>7</sup> It is twelve days' journey distant from any other sea, and into it flows the great River Euphrates and many others, whilst it is surrounded by mountains. Of late the merchants of Genoa have begun to navigate this sea, carrying ships across and launching them thereon. It is from the country on this sea also that the silk called *Ghellé* is brought.<sup>8</sup> [The said sea produces quantities of fish, especially sturgeon, at the river-mouths salmon, and other big kinds of fish.]<sup>9</sup>

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NOTE 1.—Ramusio has: "One part of the said province is subject to the Tartar, and the other part, owing to its fortresses, remains subject to the King David." We give an illustration of one of these mediæval Georgian fortresses, from a curious collection of MS. notices and drawings of Georgian subjects in the Municipal Library at Palermo, executed by a certain P. Cristoforo di Castelli of that city, who was a Theatine missionary in Georgia, in the first half of the 17th century.

The G. T. says the King was *always* called David. The Georgian Kings of the family of Bagratidae claimed descent from King David through a prince Shampath, said to have been sent north by Nebuchadnezzar; a descent which was usually asserted in their public documents. Timur in his Institutes mentions a suit of armour given him by the King of Georgia as forged by the hand of the Psalmist King. David is a