

produces a rough husk like that of a chestnut, but without anything in it. The wood is yellow like box, and very strong, and there are no other trees near it nor within a hundred miles of it, except on one side, where you find trees within about ten miles' distance. And there, the people of the country tell you, was fought the battle between Alexander and King Darius.²

The towns and villages have great abundance of everything good, for the climate is extremely temperate, being neither very hot nor very cold. The natives all worship Mahommet, and are a very fine-looking people, especially the women, who are surpassingly beautiful.

NOTE 1.—All that region has been described as “a country divided into deserts that are salt, and deserts that are not salt.” (*Vigne*, I. 16.) *Tonocain*, as we have seen (ch. xv. note 1), is the Eastern Kuhistan of Persia, but extended by Polo, it would seem to include the whole of Persian Khorasan. No city in particular is indicated as visited by the traveller, but the view I take of the position of the *Arbre Sec*, as well as his route through Kuh-Banán, would lead me to suppose that he reached the Province of TUN-O-KAIN about Tabbas.

[“Marco Polo has been said to have traversed a portion of (the Dash-i-Kavir, great Salt Desert) on his supposed route from Tabbas to Damghan, about 1272; although it is more probable that he marched further to the east, and crossed the northern portion of the Dash-i-Lut, Great Sand Desert, separating Khorasan in the south-east from Kermán, and occupying a sorrowful parallelogram between the towns of Neh and Tabbas on the north, and Kermán and Yezd on the south.” (*Curzon, Persia*, II. pp. 248 and 251.) Lord Curzon adds in a note (p. 248): “The Tunogan of the text which was originally mistaken for Damghan, is correctly explained by Yule as Tun-o- (*i.e.* and) Káin.” Major Sykes writes (ch. xxiii.): “The section of the Lut has not hitherto been rediscovered, but I know that it is desert throughout, and it is practically certain that Marco ended these unpleasant experiences at Tabas, 150 miles from Kubenán. To-day the district is known as Tun-o-Tabas, Káin being independent of it.”—H. C.]

NOTE 2.—This is another subject on which a long and somewhat discursive note is inevitable.

One of the Bulletins of the Soc. de Géographie (sér. III. tom. iii. p. 187) contains a perfectly inconclusive endeavour, by M. Roux de Rochelle, to identify the *Arbre Sec* or *Arbre Sol* with a manna-bearing oak alluded to by Q. Curtius as growing in Hyrcania. There can be no doubt that the tree described is, as Marsden points out, a *Chínár* or Oriental Plane. Mr. Ernst Meyer, in his learned *Geschichte der Botanik* (Königsberg, 1854-57, IV. 123), objects that Polo's description of the *wood* does not answer to that tree. But, with due allowance, compare with his whole account that which Olearius gives of the Chinar, and say if the same tree be not meant. “The trees are as tall as the pine, and have very large leaves, closely resembling those of the vine. The fruit looks like a chestnut, but has no kernel, so it is not eatable. The wood is of a very brown colour, and full of veins; the Persians employ it for doors and window-shutters, and when these are rubbed with oil they are incomparably handsomer than our walnut-wood joinery.” (I. 526.) The Chinar-wood is used in Kashmir for gunstocks.

The whole tenor of the passage seems to imply that some eminent *individual*