

cultivated Khorasan, which would be quite inconsistent with other data, it would have taken the travellers something like double the time to reach Shíbrgán. Where I have followed the G. T. in its reading "*quant l'en a chevauchés six journée tel che je vos ai contés, adunc treuve l'en une cité,*" etc., Pauthier's text has "*Et quant l'en a chevauchié les vi cités, si treuve l'en une cité qui a nom Sapurgan,*" and to this that editor adheres. But I suspect that *cités* is a mere lapsus for *journées*, as in the reading in one of his three MSS. What could be meant by "*chevauchier les vi cités*"?

Whether the true route be, as I suppose, by Nishapúr and Meshid, or, as Khanikoff supposes, by Herat and Badghis, it is strange that no one of those famous cities is mentioned. And we feel constrained to assume that something has been misunderstood in the dictation, or has dropt out of it. As a *probable* conjecture I should apply the six days to the extent of pleasing country described in the first lines of the chapter, and identify it with the tract between Sabzawur and the cessation of fertile country beyond Meshid. The distance would agree well, and a comparison with Fraser or Ferrier will show that even now the description, allowing for the compression of an old recollection, would be well founded; *e.g.* on the first march beyond Nishapúr: "Fine villages, with plentiful gardens full of trees, that bear fruit of the highest flavour, may be seen all along the foot of the hills, and in the little recesses formed by the ravines whence issues the water that irrigates them. It was a rich and pleasing scene, and out of question by far the most populous and cultivated tract that I had seen in Persia. . . . Next morning we quitted Derrood . . . by a very indifferent but interesting road, the glen being finely wooded with walnut, mulberry, poplar, and willow-trees, and fruit-tree gardens rising one above the other upon the mountain-side, watered by little rills. . . . These gardens extended for several miles up the glen; beyond them the bank of the stream continued to be fringed with white sycamore, willow, ash, mulberry, poplar, and woods that love a moist situation," and so on, describing a style of scenery not common in Persia, and expressing diffusely (as it seems to me) the same picture as Polo's two lines. In the valley of Nishapúr, again (we quote Arthur Conolly): "'This is Persia!' was the vain exclamation of those who were alive to the beauty of the scene; 'this is Persia!' Bah! Bah! What grass, what grain, what water! Bah! Bah!"

[' If there be a Paradise on the face of the Earth,
This is it! This is it! This is it! ']—(I. 209.)

(See *Fraser*, 405, 432-433, 434, 436.)

With reference to the dried melons of Shíbrgán, Quatremère cites a history of Herat, which speaks of them almost in Polo's words. Ibn Batuta gives a like account of the melons of Khárizm: "The surprising thing about these melons is the way the people have of slicing them, drying them in the sun, and then packing them in baskets, just as Malaga figs are treated in our part of the world. In this state they are sent to the remotest parts of India and China. There is no dried fruit so delicious, and all the while I lived at Delhi, when the travelling dealers came in, I never missed sending for these dried strips of melon." (*Q. R.* 169; *I. B.* III. 15.) Here, in the 14th century, we seem to recognise the Afghan dealers arriving in the cities of Hindustan with their annual camel-loads of dried fruits, just as we have seen them in our own day.