

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## OF THE CITY OF BALC.

BALC is a noble city and a great, though it was much greater in former days. But the Tartars and other nations have greatly ravaged and destroyed it. There were formerly many fine palaces and buildings of marble, and the ruins of them still remain. The people of the city tell that it was here that Alexander took to wife the daughter of Darius.

Here, you should be told, is the end of the empire of the Tartar Lord of the Levant. And this city is also the limit of Persia in the direction between east and north-east.<sup>1</sup>

Now, let us quit this city, and I will tell you of another country called DOGANA.<sup>2</sup>

When you have quitted the city of which I have been speaking, you ride some 12 days between north-east and east, without finding any human habitation, for the people have all taken refuge in fastnesses among the mountains, on account of the Banditti and armies that harassed them. There is plenty of water on the road, and abundance of game; there are lions too. You can get no provisions on the road, and must carry with you all that you require for these 12 days.<sup>3</sup>

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NOTE 1.—BALKH, "the mother of cities," suffered mercilessly from Chinghiz. Though the city had yielded without resistance, the whole population was marched by companies into the plain, on the usual Mongol pretext of counting them, and then brutally massacred. The city and its gardens were fired, and all buildings capable of defence were levelled. The province long continued to be harried by the Chaghatian inroads. Ibn Batuta, sixty years after Marco's visit, describes the city as still in ruins, and as uninhabited: "The remains of its mosques and colleges," he says, "are still to be seen, and the painted walls traced with azure." It is no doubt the Vaeq (*Valq*) of Clavijo, "very large, and surrounded by a broad earthen wall, thirty paces across, but breached in many parts." He describes a large portion of