

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OF TAICAN, AND THE MOUNTAINS OF SALT. ALSO OF THE PROVINCE OF CASEM.

AFTER those twelve days' journey you come to a fortified place called TAICAN, where there is a great corn market.¹ It is a fine place, and the mountains that you see towards the south are all composed of salt. People from all the countries round, to some thirty days' journey, come to fetch this salt, which is the best in the world, and is so hard that it can only be broken with iron picks. 'Tis in such abundance that it would supply the whole world to the end of time. [Other mountains there grow almonds and pistachioes, which are exceedingly cheap.]²

When you leave this town and ride three days further between north-east and east, you meet with many fine tracts full of vines and other fruits, and with a goodly number of habitations, and everything to be had very cheap. The people are worshippers of Mahomet, and are an evil and a murderous generation, whose great delight is in the wine shop; for they have good wine (albeit it be boiled), and are great toppers; in truth, they are constantly getting drunk. They wear nothing on the head but a cord some ten palms long twisted round it. They are excellent huntsmen, and take a great deal of game; in fact they wear nothing but the skins of the beasts they have taken in the chase, for they make of them both coats and shoes. Indeed, all of them are acquainted with the art of dressing skins for these purposes.³

When you have ridden those three days, you find a town called CASEM,⁴ which is subject to a count. His other towns and villages are on the hills, but through this