

## NOTE 4.—

“Degli elementi quattro principali,  
Che son la Terra, e l'Acqua, e l'Aria, e'l Foco,  
Composti sono gli universi Animalì,  
Pigliando di ciascuno assai o poco.”

(*Dati, La Sfera*, p. 9.)

*Zurficar* in the next sentence is a Mahomedan name, *Zu'lfikâr*, the title of [the edge of] Ali's sword.

NOTE 5.—Here the G. Text adds: “*Et je meisme le vi*,” intimating, I conceive, his having himself seen specimens of the asbestos—not to his having been at the place.

NOTE 6.—The story of the Salamander passing unhurt through fire is at least as old as Aristotle. But I cannot tell when the fable arose that asbestos was a substance derived from the animal. This belief, however, was general in the Middle Ages, both in Asia and Europe. “The fable of the Salamander,” says Sir Thomas Browne, “hath been much promoted by stories of incombustible napkins and textures which endure the fire, whose materials are called by the name of Salamander's wool, which many, too literally apprehending, conceive some investing part or integument of the Salamander. . . . Nor is this Salamander's wool desumed from any animal, but a mineral substance, metaphorically so called for this received opinion.”

Those who knew that the Salamander was a lizard-like animal were indeed perplexed as to its woolly coat. Thus the Cardinal de Vitry is fain to say the creature “*profert ex cute quasi quamdam lanam de quâ zonae contextae comburi non possunt igne*.” A Bestiary, published by Cahier and Martin, says of it: “*De lui naist une cose qui n'est ne soie ne lin ne laine*.” Jerome Cardan looked in vain, he says, for hair on the Salamander! Albertus Magnus calls the incombustible fibre *pluma Salamandri*; and accordingly Bold Bauduin de Sebourc finds the Salamander in the Terrestrial Paradise a kind of bird covered with the whitest plumage; of this he takes some, which he gets woven into a cloth; this he presents to the Pope, and the Pontiff applies it to the purpose mentioned in the text, viz. to cover the holy napkin of St. Veronica.

Gervase of Tilbury writes: “I saw, when lately at Rome, a broad strap of Salamander skin, like a girdle for the loins, which had been brought thither by Cardinal Peter of Capua. When it had become somewhat soiled by use, I myself saw it cleaned perfectly, and without receiving harm, by being put in the fire.”

In Persian the creature is called *Samandar*, *Samandal*, etc., and some derive the word from *Sam*, “fire,” and *Andar*, “within.” Doubtless it is a corruption of the Greek *Σαλαμάνδρα*, whatever be the origin of that. Bakui says the animal is found at Ghur, near Herat, and is like a mouse. Another author, quoted by D'Herbelot, says it is like a marten.

[Sir T. Douglas Forsyth, in his *Introductory Remarks* to Prjevalsky's *Travels to Lob-nor* (p. 20), at Aksu says: “The asbestos mentioned by Marco Polo as a utilized product of this region is not even so known in this country.”—H. C.]

+ Interesting details regarding the fabrication of cloth and paper from amianth or asbestos are contained in a report presented to the French Institute by M. Sage (*Mém. Ac. Sciences*, 2e Sem., 1806, p. 102), of which large extracts are given in the *Diction. général des Tissus*, par M. Bezon, 2e éd. vol. ii. Lyon, 1859, p. 5. He mentions that a *Sudarium* of this material is still shown at the Vatican; we hope it is the cover which Kúblái sent.

[This hope is not to be realized. Mgr. Duchesne, of the Institut de France, writes to me from Rome, from information derived from the keepers of the Vatican Museum, that there is no sudarium from the Great Khan, that indeed part of a sudarium made of asbestos is shown (under glass) in this Museum, about 20 inches long, but it is ancient, and was found in a Pagan tomb of the Appian Way.—H. C.]