

excellent captain. But after coming to the throne he never went to the wars in person save once.³ This befel in the year of Christ, 1286, and I will tell you why he went.

There was a great Tartar Chief, whose name was NAYAN,⁴ a young man [of thirty], Lord over many lands and many provinces; and he was Uncle to the Emperor Cublay Kaan of whom we are speaking. And when he found himself in authority this Nayan waxed proud in the insolence of his youth and his great power; for indeed he could bring into the field 300,000 horsemen, though all the time he was liegeman to his nephew, the Great Kaan Cublay, as was right and reason. Seeing then what great power he had, he took it into his head that he would be the Great Kaan's vassal no longer; nay more, he would fain wrest his empire from him if he could. So this Nayan sent envoys to another Tartar Prince called CAIDU, also a great and potent Lord, who was a kinsman of his, and who was a nephew of the Great Kaan and his lawful liegeman also, though he was in rebellion and at bitter enmity with his sovereign Lord and Uncle. Now the message that Nayan sent was this: That he himself was making ready to march against the Great Kaan with all his forces (which were great), and he begged Caidu to do likewise from his side, so that by attacking Cublay on two sides at once with such great forces they would be able to wrest his dominion from him.

And when Caidu heard the message of Nayan, he was right glad thereat, and thought the time was come at last to gain his object. So he sent back answer that he would do as requested; and got ready his host, which mustered a good hundred thousand horsemen.

Now let us go back to the Great Kaan, who had news of all this plot.