

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE GREAT KAAAN MAINTAINS A GUARD OF TWELVE THOUSAND HORSE, WHICH ARE CALLED KESHICAN.

YOU must know that the Great Kaan, to maintain his state, hath a guard of twelve thousand horsemen, who are styled KESHICAN, which is as much as to say "Knights devoted to their Lord." Not that he keeps these for fear of any man whatever, but merely because of his own exalted dignity. These 12,000 men have four captains, each of whom is in command of 3000; and each body of 3000 takes a turn of three days and nights to guard the palace, where they also take their meals. After the expiration of three days and nights they are relieved by another 3000, who mount guard for the same space of time, and then another body takes its turn, so that there are always 3000 on guard. Thus it goes until the whole 12,000, who are styled (as I said) Keshican, have been on duty; and then the tour begins again, and so runs on from year's end to year's end."¹

NOTE I.—I have *deduced* a reading for the word *Quescican* (Keshican), which is not found precisely in any text. Pauthier reads *Questiau* and *Quesitau*; the G. Text has *Quesitam* and *Quecitain*; the Crusca *Questi Tan*; Ramusio, *Casitan*; the Riccardiana, *Quescitam*. Recollecting the constant clerical confusion between *c* and *t*, what follows will leave no doubt I think that the true reading to which all these variations point is *Quescican*.*

In the Institutes of Ghazan Khan, we find established among other formalities for the authentication of the royal orders, that they should be stamped on the back, in black ink, with the seals of the *Four Commanders* of the *Four Kiziks*, or *Corps of the Life Guard*.

Wassáf also, in detailing the different classes of the great dignitaries of the Mongol monarchy, names (1) the *Noyáns* of the *Ulus*, or princes of the blood; (2) the great chiefs of the tribes; (3) the *Amírs of the four Keshik*, or *Corps of the Body Guard*; (4) the officers of the army, commanding ten thousands, thousands, and so on.

Moreover, in Rashiduddin, we find the identical plural form used by our author. He says that, after the sack of Baghdad, Hulaku, who had escaped from the polluted atmosphere of the city, sent "Ilká Noyán and *Qarábúgá*, with 3000 Moghul horse

* One of the nearest readings is that of the Brandenburg Latin collated by Müller, which has *Quaesicam*.