

was still at the Court of the Great Kaan, had not yet been conquered; but his armies had gone thither to make the conquest. You must know that this province has a peculiar language, and that the people are wretched Idolaters. They are tolerably close to India. There are numbers of eunuchs there, insomuch that all the Barons who keep them get them from that Province.¹

The people have oxen as tall as elephants, but not so big.² They live on flesh and milk and rice. They grow cotton, in which they drive a great trade, and also spices such as spikenard, galingale, ginger, sugar, and many other sorts. And the people of India also come thither in search of the eunuchs that I mentioned, and of slaves, male and female, of which there are great numbers, taken from other provinces with which those of the country are at war; and these eunuchs and slaves are sold to the Indian and other merchants who carry them thence for sale about the world.

There is nothing more to mention about this country, so we will quit it, and I will tell you of another province called Caugigu.

NOTE I.—I do not think it probable that Marco even touched at any port of Bengal on that mission to the Indian Seas of which we hear in the prologue; but he certainly never reached it from the Yun-nan side, and he had, as we shall presently see (*infra*, ch. lix. note 6), a wrong notion as to its position. Indeed, if he had visited it at all, he would have been aware that it was essentially a part of India, whilst in fact he evidently regarded it as an *Indo-Chinese* region, like Zardandan, Mien, and Caugigu.

There is no notice, I believe, in any history, Indian or Chinese, of an attempt by Kúblái to conquer Bengal. The only such attempt by the Mongols that we hear of is one mentioned by Firishta, as made by way of Cathay and Tibet, during the reign of Aláuddin Masa'úd, king of Delhi, in 1244, and stated to have been defeated by the local officers in Bengal. But Mr. Edward Thomas tells me he has most distinctly ascertained that this statement, which has misled every historian "from Badauni and Firishta to Briggs and Elphinstone, is founded purely on an erroneous reading" (and see a note in Mr. Thomas's *Pathan Kings of Dehli*, p. 121).

The date 1290 in the text would fix the period of Polo's final departure from Peking, if the dates were not so generally corrupt.

The subject of the last part of this paragraph, recurred to in the next, has been misunderstood and corrupted in Pauthier's text, and partially in Ramusio's. These make the *escuillés* or *escoilliez* (vide *Ducange* in v. *Escodatus*, and *Raynouard, Lex. Rom.* VI. 11) into *scholars* and what not. But on comparison of the passages in