

CHAPTER XXV.

CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF MELIBAR.

MELIBAR is a great kingdom lying towards the west. The people are Idolaters; they have a language of their own, and a king of their own, and pay tribute to nobody.¹

In this country you see more of the North Star, for it shows two cubits above the water. And you must know that from this kingdom of Melibar, and from another near it called Gozurat, there go forth every year more than a hundred corsair vessels on cruize. These pirates take with them their wives and children, and stay out the whole summer. Their method is to join in fleets of 20 or 30 of these pirate vessels together, and then they form what they call a sea cordon,² that is, they drop off till there is an interval of 5 or 6 miles between ship and ship, so that they cover something like an hundred miles of sea, and no merchant ship can escape them. For when any one corsair sights a vessel a signal is made by fire or smoke, and then the whole of them make for this, and seize the merchants and plunder them. After they have plundered them they let them go, saying: "Go along with you and get more gain, and that mayhap will fall to us also!" But now the merchants are aware of this, and go so well manned and armed, and with such great ships, that they don't fear the corsairs. Still mishaps do befall them at times.³

There is in this kingdom a great quantity of pepper, and ginger, and cinnamon, and turbit, and of nuts of India.⁴ They also manufacture very delicate and beautiful buckrams. The ships that come from the east