

The people of this region are tall and shapely, but very pale and colourless. One end of the country borders upon Great Rosia. And as there is no more to be said about it, I will now proceed, and first I will tell you about the Province of Rosia.

NOTE 1.—In the Ramusian version we have a more intelligent representation of the facts regarding the *Land of Darkness*: “Because for most part of the winter months the sun appears not, and the air is dusky, as it is just before the dawn when you see and yet do not see;” and again below it speaks of the inhabitants catching the fur animals “in summer when they have continuous daylight.” It is evident that the writer of this version *did* and the writer of the original French which we have translated from *did not* understand what he was writing. The whole of the latter account implies belief in the perpetuity of the darkness. It resembles Pliny’s hazy notion of the northern regions: * “pars mundi damnata a rerum naturâ et densâ mersa caligine.” Whether the fault is due to Rustician’s ignorance or is Polo’s own, who can say? We are willing to debit it to the former, and to credit Marco with the improved version in Ramusio. In the *Masâlak-al-Absâr*, however, we have the following passage in which the conception is similar: “Merchants do not ascend (the Wolga) beyond Bolghar; from that point they make excursions through the province of Julman (supposed to be the country on the Kama and Viatka). The merchants of the latter country penetrate to Yughra, which is the extremity of the North. Beyond that you see no trace of habitation except a great Tower built by Alexander, after which there is nothing but Darkness.” The narrator of this, being asked what he meant, said: “It is a region of desert mountains, where frost and snow continually reign, where the sun never shines, no plant vegetates, and no animal lives. Those mountains border on the Dark Sea, on which rain falls perpetually, fogs are ever dense, and the sun never shows itself, and on tracts perpetually covered with snow.” (*N. et Ex.* XIII. i. 285.)

NOTE 2.—This is probably a story of great antiquity, for it occurs in the legends of the mythical *Ughuz*, Patriarch of the Turk and Tartar nations, as given by Rashid-uddin. In this hero’s campaign towards the far north, he had ordered the old men to be left behind near Almalik; but a very ancient sage called Bushi Khwaja persuaded his son to carry him forward in a box, as they were sure sooner or later to need the counsel of experienced age. When they got to the land of *Karâ Hulun*, Ughuz and his officers were much perplexed about finding their way, as they had arrived at the Land of Darkness. The old Bushi was then consulted, and his advice was that they should take with them 4 mares and 9 she-asses that had foals, and tie up the foals at the entrance to the Land of Darkness, but drive the dams before them. And when they wished to return they would be guided by the scent and maternal instinct of the mares and she-asses. And so it was done. (See *Erdmann Temudschin*, p. 478.) Ughuz, according to the Mussulman interpretation of the Eastern Legends, was the great-grandson of Japhet.

The story also found its way into some of the later Greek forms of the Alexander Legends. Alexander, when about to enter the Land of Darkness, takes with him only picked young men. Getting into difficulties, the King wants to send back for some old sage who should advise. Two young men had smuggled their old father with them in anticipation of such need, and on promise of amnesty they produce him. He gives the advice to use the mares as in the text. (See *Müller’s ed. of Pseudo-Callisthenes*, Bk. II. ch. xxxiv.)

* That is, in one passage of Pliny (iv. 12); for in another passage from his multifarious note book, where Thule is spoken of, the Arctic day and night are much more distinctly characterised (IV. 16).