

NOTE 3.—Ibn Batuta thus describes the traffic that took place with the natives of the Land of Darkness: "When the Travellers have accomplished a journey of 40 days across this Desert tract they encamp near the borders of the Land of Darkness. Each of them then deposits there the goods that he has brought with him, and all return to their quarters. On the morrow they come back to look at their goods, and find laid beside them skins of the Sable, the Vair, and the Ermine. If the owner of the goods is satisfied with what is laid beside his parcel he takes it, if not he leaves it there. The inhabitants of the Land of Darkness may then (on another visit) increase the amount of their deposit, or, as often happens, they may take it away altogether and leave the goods of the foreign merchants untouched. In this way is the trade conducted. The people who go thither never know whether those with whom they buy and sell are men or goblins, for they never see any one!" (II. 401.)

[“Ibn Batuta’s account of the market of the ‘Land of Darkness’ . . . agrees almost word for word with Dr Hirth’s account of the ‘Spirit Market, taken from the Chinese.’” (*Parker, China Review*, XIV. p. 359.)—H. C.]

Abulfeda gives exactly the same account of the trade; and so does Herberstein. Other Oriental writers ascribe the same custom to the *Wisû*, a people three months’ journey from Bolghar. These *Wisû* have been identified by Fraehn with the *Wesses*, a people spoken of by Russian historians as dwelling on the shores of the Bielo Osero, which Lake indeed is alleged by a Russian author to have been anciently called *Wûsu*, misunderstood into *Weissensee*, and thence rendered into Russian Bielo Osero (“White Lake”). (*Golden Horde*, App. p. 429; *Bûsching*, IV. 359-360; *Herberstein in Ram.* II. 168 v.; *Fraehn, Bolghar*, pp. 14, 47; *Do., Ibn Fozlan*, 205 seqq., 221.) Dumb trade of the same kind is a circumstance related of very many different races and periods, e.g., of a people beyond the Pillars of Hercules by Herodotus, of the Sabaean dealers in frankincense by Theophrastus, of the Seres by Pliny, of the Sasians far south of Ethiopia by Cosmas, of the people of the Clove Islands by Kazwini, of a region beyond Segelmessa by Mas’udi, of a people far beyond Timbuctoo by Cadamosto, of the Veddas of Ceylon by Marignolli and more modern writers, of the Poliars of Malabar by various authors, by Paulus Jovius of the Laplanders, etc. etc.

Pliny’s attribution, surely erroneous, of this custom to the Chinese [see supra, H.C.], suggests that there may have been a misunderstanding by which this method of trade was confused with that other curious system of dumb higgling, by the pressure of the knuckles under a shawl, a masonic system in use from Peking to Bombay, and possibly to Constantinople.

The term translated here “Light,” and the “Light Country,” is in the G. T. “*a la Carte*,” “*a la Cartes*.” This puzzled me for a long time, as I see it puzzled Mr. Hugh Murray, Signor Bartoli, and Lazari (who passes it over). The version of Pipino, “*ad Lucis terras finitimas deferunt*,” points to the true reading;—*Carte* is an error for *Clarté*.

The reading of this chapter is said to have fired Prince Rupert with the scheme which resulted in the establishment of the Hudson’s Bay Company.

CHAPTER XXII.

DESCRIPTION OF ROSIA AND ITS PEOPLE. PROVINCE OF LAC.

ROSLA is a very great province, lying towards the north. The people are Christians, and follow the Greek doctrine.