

could be soon made, were it not for the tremendous cold; but this renders its accomplishment almost impossible.³

Now then let us speak of the Great Sea, as I was about to do. To be sure many merchants and others have been there, but still there are many again who know nothing about it, so it will be well to include it in our Book. We will do so then, and let us begin first with the Strait of Constantinople.

NOTE I.—Ibn Fozlan, the oldest Arabic author who gives any detailed account of the Russians (and a very remarkable one it is), says he “never saw people of form more perfectly developed; they were tall as palm-trees, and ruddy of countenance,” but at the same time “the most uncleanly people that God hath created,” drunken, and frightfully gross in their manners. (*Fraehn's Ibn Fozlan*, p. 5 *seqq.*) Ibn Batuta is in some respects less flattering; he mentions the silver-mines noticed in our text: “At a day's distance from Ukak* are the hills of the Russians, who are Christians. They have red hair and blue eyes; ugly to look at, and crafty to deal with. They have silver-mines, and it is from their country that are brought the *saum* or ingots of silver with which buying and selling is carried on in this country (Kipchak or the Ponent of Polo). The weight of each *saumah* is 5 ounces” (II. 414). Mas'udi also says: “The Russians have in their country a silver-mine similar to that which exists in Khorasan, at the mountain of Banjhir (*i.e.* *Panjshir*; II. 15; and see *supra*, vol. i. p. 161). These positive and concurrent testimonies as to Russian silver-mines are remarkable, as modern accounts declare that no silver is found in Russia. And if we go back to the 16th century, Herberstein says the same. There was no silver, he says, except what was imported; silver money had been in use barely 100 years; previously they had used oblong ingots of the value of a ruble, without any figure or legend. (*Ram.* II. 159.)

But a welcome communication from Professor Bruun points out that the statement of Ibn Batuta identifies the silver-mines in question with certain mines of argentiferous lead-ore near the River Mious (a river falling into the sea of Azof, about 22 miles west of Taganrog); an ore which even in recent times has afforded 60 per cent. of lead, and $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. of silver. And it was these mines which furnished the ancient Russian *rubles* or ingots. Thus the original *ruble* was the *saumah* of Ibn Batuta, the *sommo* of Pegolotti. A ruble seems to be still called by some term like *saumah* in Central Asia; it is printed *soom* in the Appendix to Davies's Punjab Report, p. xi. And Professor Bruun tells me that the silver ruble is called *Som* by the Ossethi of Caucasus.†

Franc.-Michel quotes from Fitz-Stephen's Desc. of London (*temp.* Henry II.):—

“*Aurum mittit Arabs*
Seres purpureas vestes; Galli sua vina;
Norwegi, Russi, varium, grysium, sabelinas.”

* This Ukak of Ibn Batuta is not, as I too hastily supposed (vol. i. p. 8) the *Ucaca* of the Polos on the Volga, but a place of the same name on the Sea of Azof, which appears in some mediæval maps as *Locac* or *Locaq* (*i.e.* *l'Ocac*), and which Elie de Laprimaudaie in his *Periplus of the Mediæval Caspian*, locates at a place called Kaszik, a little east of Mariupol. (*Et. sur le Comm. au Moyen. Age*, p. 230.) I owe this correction to a valued correspondent, Professor Bruun, of Odessa.

† The word is, however, perhaps Or. Turkish; *Som*, “pure, solid.” (See *Pavet de Courteille*, and *Vámbéry*, s. v.)