

OF GIORGIANIE AND OF THE GATE OF IRON ≡ MARCO POLO ≡

HERE HE TELLS OF THE KING OF THE GIORGIENS AND OF THEIR AFFAIRS.
 VB **H**In Giorgianie is a province which is ruled by a king who is always called
 P VB David Melic, which means to say in French King David ; and he is
 TA subject to the king of the Tartars. And they say that anciently all the kings of that
 I V province who were born were born with a mark of an eagle on the right [10c] shoulder,
 I and good archers & good fighters in battle. They are very fine people and valiant in arms
 I for want of preachers they are so no more, but in many things they observe the Greek rule,
 V TA L and the hair they wear short in the way of Greek¹ clergy. And this Giorgianie is the
 VB I L province which it is written that king Alexandre the Great could not pass when he wished
 VA to go to the sunsetting,² because the road is narrow and very dangerous. For on
 L L V the one side is the sea of Bachu and on the other pathless woods and a very great mountain
 VB where they cannot ride. The road is very narrow which is left between the mountain
 TA and the sea so that one cannot ride, and this narrow road lasts for more than four
 I leagues,³ & two men could not walk through it together side by side but one would fall into
 I the sea; so that a few men will hold the pass against all the men of this world. And
 FB VA this was the reason why Alexandre could not pass; and I tell you that Alexandre
 VA had a very strong tower built there and made a fortress there at the mouth of that pass so
 VB L that those people should not be able to pass to come upon him nor upon his people.
 L And it is the place where the Book of Alexandre tells how he shut in the Tartars
 L within two mountains. And it was not true that they were Tartars, but they
 L were a people who were called Comain and other races enough, for there were
 L not Tartars at that time. There are towns and villages enough in this province and
 L FB they have silk in very great abundance, and silk cloth and cloths of gold of all sorts
 I are made there the most beautiful that man ever saw, and they are cheap and cheaper
 L than woollen, because there is much silk & there are many workers of that craft. There also
 L L I are found the best goshawks in the world called avigi, & fine places for catching birds.
 VA All the men of that province live as it were sumptuously, for there is abundance [10d] of
 FB VL all things and they live by trade and by labour on the land. The province is all
 VB full of great mountains and of very narrow passes and of strong, and many springs,
 VA Z so that I tell you that for the narrowness of the passes the Tartars could never quite
 VA entirely have the rule of that province. For one part of the province is subject to the Tartar

¹ P: occidentis

² L,V,R: "north" Z omits P: ad zorzannos . . . ab oriente

³ V,L: "marches"