

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD^s HOW ASBESTOS IS MADE

.60.

a baron who had Çulficar for name, a Turk merchant, who was very knowing in *my judgement & trustworthy*, who told how he had stayed three years in that province for the great Kaan in charge of the work of the mines to have that salamander brought out for the lord and that andanique and that steel and everything, and he used to have these salamanders made. [And al]ways¹ the great Kaan sends a lord there for three years to rule the province and to do the business of the salamander. And this baron my companion told me the facts,² and he was a person who had often seen it made, and I saw them myself—I saw many made. The way moreover of making salamanders is this. For I tell you that when one has dug from the mountains some of that vein of which you have heard, and one has torn it and broken it up, it is twisted together³ and makes threads like wool. And therefore when one has this vein he has it dried in the sun; and then when it is dry he has it pounded in a great copper⁴ mortar; and then when it is pounded he has it washed with water, and only that thread like wool of which I have told you stays on the top of the water, and all the earth clinging there, which is worthless, falls off, goes to the bottom of the water, [&] is thrown away. Then this thread which is like wool, he has it well spun like wool and then he has it woven & cloth or towels & mantles made of it, which we say are of salamander. And when the towels are made I tell you that they are not at all quite white, and they are brown when they are taken from the loom. But when they wish to make them white they put them in the fire and leave them to stay there a space of an hour, and when it is taken out the towel becomes very white like snow. And whenever these salamander towels have any soil or stain one [25c] puts them in fire and leaves them there a space and they are not burnt up nor hurt but become white like snow; & in that way they keep them pure & clean. And this is the truth of the making of the salamander which I have told you, no other. I have seen it with my eyes put into the fire & come back very white. And those of the country tell it in this way themselves, but of the salamander serpent which is said to live in the fire I heard nothing in the parts of the east; and all the other things which are said of it, that it is an animal, are lies and fables. And again I tell you that there is a towel of it at Rome which the great Kaan sent to the Apostle for a very great present when he sent him the two brothers for ambassadors, and for this reason the holy napkin of

¹ & toutes couses foies probably for & toutes couses & toutes foies cf. B. p. 47.

² le fait P: modum—taking le fait for “the making”. L: hec que . . . primo audiuerat propriis oculis uidit.

³ & len la ront & despece elle se trent ensemble Both reading and version are uncertain. B. reads se tient ensemble and translates: si ha un bel romperla e spezzarla: esse si mantiene unita, LT: et stringitur simul L: cum frangitur est tota plena pillis VB: batuta eben rota parre escha come fil dellana

⁴ TA: chuoio VA: chuore LT: ferro V: metalo