

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD^s THEIR HAWKING & FOOD

.69.

only two wheels covered with black felt which is so good and so well prepared that if it
 rained all day on the cart water would soak nothing that was in the cart under that
 cover of felt. And they have them brought and drawn by horses and by oxen and
 sometimes by good camels. And on these carts they carry their wives and their children
 and all the things and food which they need. And in this way they go wherever they wish to go,
 and thus they carry everything which they need. And I tell you that the Tartar ladies trade,
 buy, and sell, and do all the work that is needed for their lords and family and for
 themselves.¹ In expense they are not burdensome to their husbands, and the reason is that they
 make much gain by their own work. They are also very provident in managing the family and
 are very careful in preparing food, and do all the other duties of the house with great diligence.
 And so their husbands leave all the care of the house to their wives. For the men trouble
 themselves with [28c] nothing at all but with hunting and with feats of battle & of
 war and with hawking and with falcons and with goshawks, like gentlemen, & in this
 they take great delight. They have the best falcons in the world, and likewise dogs. They live
 only on flesh and on milk and on game, the flesh of all wild animals which they take in
 their country, and also they eat certain little animals which are like rabbits, which with us
 are called Pharaoh's rats,² which are there in great abundance in the midst of the
 plains below³ and everywhere. They eat even flesh of horses and of dogs and of
 mares and oxen and camels, provided that they are fat, and gladly drink camel and mares
 milk, and in general they eat of all flesh of other animals clean and unclean. They keep
 themselves so that for nothing in the world would the one touch the wife of the
 other, for if it happen that a man were taken they hold it for an evil thing and vile
 exceedingly. And the loyalty of the husbands towards the wives is a wonderful thing, and a
 very noble thing the virtue of those women who if they are ten, or twenty, a peace and in-
 estimable unity is among them, nor is it ever heard that they say an evil word, but all are
 intent and anxious (as has been said) over the trade, that is the selling and buying, and things
 belonging to their occupations, the life of the house and the care of the family and of the children,
 who are common between them. For in my judgement they are those women who most in the
 world deserve to be commended by all for their very great virtue; and they are all the more
 worthy of very well earned praise for virtue & chastity because the men are allowed to be able to
 take as many wives as they please, to the very great confusion of the Christian women (I mean in
 these our parts). For when one man has only one wife, in which marriages there ought to be a
 most singular faith and chastity, or [else] confusion of so great a sacrament of marriage, I am

¹ a se mesme B. corrects plausibly to a se mesnie. ² See PN.

³ desote perhaps read destee V: de instade R: nella state TA,LT,VA,P omit. But FA:
 en pertuis souz terre FB: es partuis soubz terre ("in burrows under ground") seem to show
 that desote is very early. cf. c. 213. P calls the rats reptilia.