

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD & GO·CCL·MILES A DAY

·98·

from the same place, they set out from the place where they are on two good horses strong and swift and fresh; they bind up all their belly and chest with fine bands and wrap up their heads,<sup>1</sup> for otherwise they could not endure; and set themselves to ride at full gallop to the utmost of their horses power, and gallop until they are come to the next post at twenty-five<sup>2</sup> miles, and when they are come near they sound a sort of horn<sup>3</sup> which is heard from far, that they may prepare the horses; and then they find other two good horses ready, fresh, and rested, and swift. And those at the next post, who hear them coming by the bells, thus also have horses harnessed and men prepared like those who are now coming. They take what they have, either letter or other thing, and they mount [46c] so quickly that they do not stop nor rest themselves neither little nor much. And when they are mounted they leave the others and set themselves immediately at full gallop as much as they can get out of the horse, and do not cease to gallop till they are come to the next post; and there they find the other horses and men ready to change for the others and they mount as quickly and set themselves[on]the road. And so they do always, galloping from one post to the other and changing horses and men, all the day till the evening, so that they go a wonderful distance. And in this way which I have told you messengers like these go quite two hundred and fifty<sup>4</sup> miles in one day<sup>5</sup> to carry news to the great lord speedily from distant parts, and his orders are carried to distant places with much speed; and also when there is need they go quite three hundred. And if it is a very grave case they ride at night; and if the moon does not shine, the men of the post go running before them with torches to the next post. Nevertheless the said messengers do not go so swiftly at night-time as by day, out of regard to those who run on foot with the torches, who cannot be so rapid. And messengers like these who can endure such a labour of running are much prized & have great pay from the court. Now let us leave you this account of the messengers and of these posts, of which indeed we have told and shown you clearly. But next I shall tell you of a great kindness which the great lord does to his men twice a year.

**H**OW THE GREAT KAN HAS HIS PEOPLE HELPED WHEN THEY HAVE SUFFERED IN CORN AND IN ANIMALS. Now you may know also for truth that the great lord sends his trusty messengers and inspectors always every year at a certain time through all his lands and realms and provinces to know of his men, if

·99·

<sup>1</sup> LT: caput & corpus TA': la testa elchapo

<sup>2</sup> LT: trigintaquinque

<sup>3</sup> FB: campanelles See just below.

<sup>4</sup> V: duxento e quaranta

<sup>5</sup> LT: tota die & nocte