

RELIEF OF SUFFERERS & PLANTING OF TREES = MARCO POLO

R VB *any wrong has been done them and if they have had loss of their corn either through*  
P P *failure of weather, that is by storms or by great rains and winds, as often happens, or*  
LT R *through locusts,<sup>1</sup> caterpillars, or through other pestilence that year. And if he finds*  
LT R *that any of his people have had in any place such loss and that they have no corn, he*  
LT P *does not take the tax from them which they ought to give for that season or that year*  
VA P *in which the plague was, but he gives them of his own corn from his granaries as much as*  
V VA *they need, that they may have it to sow and to eat that year. And this is indeed a great*  
V VA *kindness of [46d] the lord. The great lord has this done in the summer, and in the winter*  
FB R *he has just another such thing done to those who shall have had loss of flocks. For*  
LT R *he has inquiry made, and if he finds in some province a man whose animals are dead of*  
FB VB *a mortality or pestilence which may be come upon them, or through cold, he has some*  
R VA *of his own animals, which he has from the tithe of the other provinces, given to him &*  
P VA *sold to him cheaply and has him helped more or less according as his loss has been, and has*  
VA R *no tax taken from him in that year, according as the loss requires. And all his thought*  
and chief anxiety is to help the people who are under him, that they may be able to live, work,  
and multiply their goods. But we wish to tell another characteristic of the great Kaan, that  
if by accidental chance lightning strike some flock of ewes or sheep or other animals of whatever  
kind, which may belong to one or more persons, and be the flock as large as you like, the great  
Kaan would not exact the tithe for three years. And equally if it happen that lightning strike  
some ship full of merchandise, he does not wish any rent or share of it, because he thinks it a  
bad omen when lightning strikes anyone's goods; and the great Kaan says, God hated him,  
therefore he has struck him with lightning. And so he does not wish such goods struck by the  
FB divine anger to enter into his treasury. So that in such way as you have heard the great  
FB lord helps and supports his men every year. Now I have told you of this subject,  
and then I shall tell you of another matter.

R **H**OW THE GREAT KAAH HAS TREES PLANTED BY THE WAYS. Now you may  
VA P know quite truly that the great lord has done another beautiful and con-  
venient thing, for he has arranged that by all those main roads through the  
province of Catai and through the neighbouring provinces, by which the messengers and  
the merchants and the other people go, he has had trees planted there beside the  
LT FB R ways on either side two or three paces distant the one from the other, which are of the  
sort which grow large and tall. And I tell you that they are so large that they can well  
FB be seen from very far. And the great Kaan has had this done so that each may see  
LT the roads, that the merchants may be able to rest there in the shade, and that they may not  
FB LT lose the way either by day or by night when they go through the desert places, for you will

<sup>1</sup> FA,FB: tempeste V: tempesta