

HORSES & ARMOUR AND POISON IN CARAGIAN ≈ MARCO POLO

VB dear. For you may know that *it is much prized because great medicine is made of*
R V V *it, and amongst the rest it has three important virtues.* For the first is, if a man is bitten
FB FB by a mad dog¹ and one gives him a little, as much as would be the weight of a small
R V dinar, to drink in wine he is healed immediately. And again the second virtue, when a
Z Z lady cannot give birth and has pain and cries aloud, then they give her a little of
V that serpents gall in drink and then the lady is set free from the pains and gives birth
FB R immediately as soon as she has drunk it. The third virtue is that when one has any
VB R eruption like a boil or other worse thing which grows on the body, then one puts a little
R of this gall on it, and then it is healed in a few days. And it is used in many of their
FB FB medicines for many other things. And for this reason which I have told you this gall
V of this great serpent is held very dear in that province. And again I tell you that
FB FB they sell the flesh of this serpent very dear because it is very good to eat and they
V FB eat it very gladly. Moreover I tell you that this serpent goes sometimes when it is
FB FB hungry to the places where the wolves and the lions and the bears and the other great
FB FB fierce wild beasts bring forth their cubs and, wherever the cubs are found, it eats the
FB FB large and the small, while their fathers and their mothers cannot defend them; and if it can
FB FB catch them it eats the large also, for they make no provision to defend themselves from them.
R And again I tell you that great horses and good are bred in this province and they
R carry them when they are young into Indie to sell. Moreover you may know that they
R take out from all one joint, two joints, or three from the bone of the tail, so that
L R R the horse may not be able [54b] to swish the tail to strike him who is on it, or
Z Z move the tail this way and that when it runs, but it remains hanging down. For it seems
Z Z to them too ugly a thing when the horse runs and swishes its tail. And again you
FB FB may know that these people ride keeping the stirrups long like Frenchmen among us.
VA And it is called long for this reason, because the Tartars and almost all other people carry
FB R Z them short for the sake of shooting, because when they shoot they raise themselves up straight
R Z on the horses. And they have armour covered with boiled buffalo hide, and they have
FB R Z lances & arrows and shields, and they have cross-bows, and they poison all the
R Z cross-bow quarrels. And it was told me for a sure thing that all, as well women as men, and
R Z specially those who purpose to do evil, always carry poison with them so that, if by chance
anyone is caught after something has been committed for which he ought to be put to torture,
before he will bear the pains of the lash he puts poison into his mouth and swallows it, that
he may die through it as soon as possible. But because the government is aware of this, dog's
dung is always kept ready so that if anyone after being taken were to swallow poison for the
said reason, one may immediately make him swallow the said dung in order that he may vomit

¹ de chien arabien