

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD^s GOLD & SILVER TOWERS

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HERE HE TELLS OF THE CITY OF MIEN. Now you may know that when one has ridden the fifteen days marches of which I have told you above in so barren and as it were out of the way places, and where one must carry his victuals by the way because there is no dwelling of men, as I have told you, then one finds a beautiful city which is also called Mien, which is very great and noble and is head of the kingdom of Mien. The people are all idolaters and have a language [57c] for themselves. They are subject to the rule of the great Kaan. And in this city is so noble a thing and so rich, of which I shall tell you. For it was true that there was formerly a very rich and powerful king in this city, and he was loved by all, as I shall tell you, according to what was said to me. And this king, when he came to death he commands in his will that there should be made him a monument like this, that on his tomb, that is on his monument, for burial of his body should be made two round towers, in the likeness of pyramids, one at one end and the other at the other, one of gold and one of silver very richly worked. And those towers are made in such fashion as I shall tell you. For the one tower was of beautiful stone. Then it was covered outside all over with plates of gold. And the gold was quite one finger thick. The whole tower was so covered with it that when one saw it it did not seem to be of anything but of gold alone. It was quite ten paces high, and just as¹ thick as was suitable to the height of which it was. It was round above, and at the top there was a round ball, and all round the roundness it was all full of gilded bells which sounded with great sound every time the wind struck among them; and it is a great triumph to see and to bear. And the other tower of which [I have told you] above was all covered with silver, and was altogether like and made in such fashion as that of gold, no more nor less, so that it seems all of silver; and of that size and of that shape both in quantity & height; likewise with little bells of silver. And between these towers he caused his tomb to be made, where he is now buried. And in the same way the tomb was covered partly with plates of gold and partly with silver. And that king had these made for his grandeur and for the honour of his soul, that there should be memory of him after his death. And I tell you that they were the most beautiful towers in the world to see, and they were also well made and noble and of very exceedingly great value. And when the sun touches them then a great glory issues from them and they are seen from very far. Moreover I tell you that the great Kaan conquers this province in such a new and mocking way as I shall tell you.² It was true that at the court of the great Kaan, when he planned to

¹ V: *quatro* perhaps for *quanto*

² V introduces this story thus: "Now this about the beauty of these towers reached the ears of the great Kaan, and it was told him by certain of his court called falconers (*ostorini*), that is hunters (*chuxatori*)."