

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD & THE TRADES IN QUINSAI

in so great number that I dare not say it; and not only near the squares, where places are usually assigned to them, but all over the city. And they stay very sumptuously with great perfumes and with many maid-servants, & the houses all decorated. These women are very clever and practised in knowing how to flatter and coax with ready words and suited to each kind of person, so that the foreigners who have once indulged themselves with them stay as it were in an ecstasy, and are so much taken with their sweetness and charms that they can never forget them. And from this it comes to pass that when they return home they say that they have been in Quinsai, that is in the city of Heaven, and never see the hour that¹ they may be able to go back there again. In other streets are stationed all the physicians, astrologers, who also teach to read and to write. And infinite other trades have their places round about the said squares; on each of which there are two great palaces, one at one end and the other at the other, where are stationed the lords deputed by the king, who make inquiry immediately if any difference occurs between the merchants, and in the same way between any of the inhabitants of those quarters. The said lords are charged to watch every day whether the guards who are set on the neighbouring bridges (as will be said below) are actually there or have failed, and punish them as they think right.

Along the principal street of which we have spoken, which runs from one end of the city to the other, there are on one side and on the other houses, very large palaces with their gardens, and near by them houses of artizans who work in their shops; and at all hours are met people who are going up and down on their business, so that to see so great a crowd anyone would believe that it would not be possible that victuals are found enough to be able to feed it; and yet on every market day all the said squares are covered and filled with people and merchants who bring them both on carts and on boats, and all is disposed of. And again it was contained there in the said writing that this city had twelve different manner of trades, one of each craft, FB L Z which are reckoned the more important and have greater dealings than the others, for there are Z R Z very many others. And each trade of these twelve has 12000 stations, that is to say 12000 Z houses for each trade of the aforesaid. And in each house or station there were at least ten Z Z men to exercise those arts, and some fifteen, and some twenty, and thirty, and some Z TA forty. And do not understand that they are all masters, but men who do what the Z masters and patrons order them. And all this is necessary because many other cities of Z FB the province are supplied with necessaries from this city. And it was contained again in Z FB that writing that there are so many merchants and so rich, who do so much and so FB great trade, that there is not a man who could say or tell the truth about them that Z FB TA

who could not bear the cold, not being used to it. They are accustomed to wash themselves every day, and would not eat if they were not washed." cf. p. 334 below.

¹ & non veggono mai l'ora, che—an idiom used apparently as we say "count the minutes till . . ."