

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD'S PLEASURES OF THE LAKE

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to great of the city, and they are marvellously adorned inside and outside. And again there were many abbeyes in that place round the lake and many monasteries of idols, which are in the very greatest numbers, where stay a large number of monks who serve them. And again I tell you that in the middle of the lake are two little islands on which there are, on each one, very wonderful palaces very great and noble and rich, so well made and so ornamented that they are really like some emperors palaces, with so many rooms and galleries that it could not be believed. And so when some notable one wishes to make a great wedding or any great banquet in a smart place they go to one of these palaces and there with dignity can make their wedding and their feast. And they find there all the furniture that is needed for the banquet, that is of plate and of linen and of dishes and everything else which they need according to their usages, which are all kept in the said palaces for the people of the said city for this purpose, because they were built by them. And sometimes there would be a hundred, and some would wish to make feasts and others weddings, and yet all would be accommodated in different rooms and verandahs with such order that one does not inconvenience the others. Besides this, boats or barges are found on the said lake in great numbers, large and small, to go for enjoyment and to give oneself pleasure; and in these there can stay, ten, fifteen, and twenty, and more persons, because they are fifteen to twenty paces long with broad and flat bottoms, so that they sail without rocking on either side. And every one who likes to enjoy himself with women or with his companions takes one of the boats like these, which are always kept adorned with beautiful seats and tables and with all the other furniture necessary for making a feast. Above they are covered and flat, where men stand with poles which they stick into the ground (for the said lake is not more than two paces deep) and guide the said barges where they are ordered. The covering on the inside part is painted with different colours and patterns, and likewise all the barge; and there are windows round about which they can shut and open, so that those who stay seated at the meal at the sides may be able to look this way and that and delight the eyes with the variety and beauty of the places to which they are taken. Here come the best wines, hence are brought perfect confections; and in this way those men go about this lake rejoicing together, for their mind and care is set on nothing else but bodily pleasure and enjoyment in feasting together. And you shall know that this lake gives them greater refreshment and comfort than anything else which may be had on land, because on one side it lies along the city so that all the grandeur and beauty of that is seen from afar while one stays on the said barges, so many are the palaces, temples, monasteries, gardens with very lofty trees, set upon the waterside. And barges like these are found on the said lake at all times with people who go for enjoyment; for the inhabitants of this city never think of anything else but after that they have done their work or business to spend part of the day with their ladies, or with courtesans, in giving themselves to pleasure either in the said barges or in carriages about the city, of which we must say something, because they are one of the pleasures which the inhabitants