

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD TO PROTECT FROM FIRE

the number of strokes; and they never sleep, but stay always on the watch. Then in the morning when the sun begins to rise they begin to beat one hour as they did in the evening, and so from hour to hour. Some of them go through the district seeing if anyone keeps a light lit or fire after the hours allowed; and if they see it they mark the door and make the master appear before the lords in the morning, and if he does not find a lawful excuse he is punished. If they find anyone who is walking at night beyond the fixed hours they detain him and present him to the lords in the morning. If by day also they see any poor man who through being crippled cannot work, they make him go to stay in the hospitals, of which there are an infinite number all through the city made by the ancient kings, and they have great revenues. And if he is sound they compel him to do some work. As soon as ever they see fire alight in any house they make it known by beating on the tabernacle, and the guards from the other bridges run there together to put it out, and to carry the goods of the merchants or of others into the said towers for safety; and they put them also in boats and carry them to the islands which are in the lake. For no dweller in the city would have the courage to come out of the house at night time nor to go to the fire, but only those to whom the goods belong go there and these guards who go to help, and they are never less than a thousand or two thousand. They keep guard also in case of any rebellion or rising which the inhabitants of the city might make. And again I tell you another thing, that inside the town is made in many places distant a mile one from the other a great hill, upon which R VB at the top<sup>1</sup> is a timber tower commanding the whole city, in which always (and especially R L VB at night) the guard is set, and on that tower is hung a great wooden board, in which— R R a man holds it in the hand and strikes inside there with the other with a wooden mallet R R P so that it is well heard very far. And some of the said watchmen stay there continually R to make signal in case of fire, because if they did not make prompt provision for it it would run a risk of burning half the city. And this board he sounds with that mallet every time V that a fire is seen to be lighted in the town, or in the same way, as has been said, if it VB V R should happen that any tumult or uproar were made in the city so that those on the P VA tower could see or hear it. And as soon as it happens they sound that board immediately that the sound may be heard round about and everyone may know that there is fire in the city P FB or other alarm, and all the guards of the neighbouring bridges may pick up the arms and R run where there is need. And know that the great Kaan has this town very well guarded FB and with a very great people because it is the head and see of the kingdom and of all FB the province of Mangi, and because there is also much property & great treasure in FB this city and on the other hand the great Kaan has great revenue and great duties from it, FB FB so great that whoever heard it said could hardly believe it, and so greater and more Z

<sup>1</sup> FB: *ou quel a dessoubz*—exactly describing the relation of the modern Drum Tower, which was rebuilt on ancient foundations, to the Ch'êng-huang Hill.