

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD'S MAGIC PRECIOUS STONES

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he immediately made them cut off the head of one of the barons who was captain of that army who had fled so evilly, and the other he sends to the desert island named *Ciorcia* where he has many people destroyed for grave offences, and there he made him die in this way. For when he sends anyone to the aforesaid island to be killed, he causes his hands to be very well wrapped round with skin of a buffalo then lately flayed, and to be tightly sewn; and when the skin is dried it is shrunken round the hands so that by no means can it be moved from them, and so he is left there to end with a death of agony because he cannot help himself and has nothing to eat, and if he wishes to eat grass he must crawl on the ground. And in this way he made the baron perish. And he did this and caused them to be so cruelly treated because he had known that they had behaved ill in that affair. And again I tell you a very great wonder not, in my judgement, to be passed in silence, which happened in this action, which I had forgotten. You may know that the great *Kaan* sent to the great island those two barons and that they took the plain, as I have told you above. They took many men in a castle which they took by storm on that island, and because they had not been willing to give themselves up the two barons command by common consent that they all be killed and that the heads of all should be cut off. And it was thus done, for the heads of all were cut off except of eight<sup>1</sup> men only who could in no way be killed by iron, who being in the hands of the *Tartars* & being struck with many blows of the sword there was no way that they could kill them; and of these they cannot have the heads cut off. And this happened by virtue of precious stones which they had. For, this being a marvel to all the *Tartar* host, those eight were stripped naked and searched and they had each of them a stone sewn in his right arm, inside between the flesh and the skin, so that it was not seen outside. And this stone was so charmed<sup>2</sup> by the skill of the devil and had such virtue that as long as one might have it on him he could not die by iron nor be wounded. And the barons, when the reason that those cannot die by iron was told them, they have them clubbed with thick wooden clubs and they died immediately. Then when they were dead they have those stones taken from the arms of each, as I have told you, and hold them very dear.<sup>3</sup> Now thus this story happened and this matter as I have described to you. After that we have told of this story of the battle and of the discomfiture and misfortune of the people of the great *Kaan*, now we shall speak of the manner of the idols. So we will leave them then and return to our matter to go on with our book.

<sup>1</sup> Z: nouem V: nuouezento

<sup>2</sup> e de ceste pieres estoit si encante FB: Et ces pierres estoient si enchantees cf. Z p. lxi. So probably omit *de*; or translate, "And by this stone he was so bewitched"

<sup>3</sup> V: "And when the stones which they had upon them were taken away they died at once." e tratoge le pietre i aueano adosso immediate furono mortj