

CHAPTER XXIII.

VERBIEST AND GERBILLON.

Father VERBIEST, famous for his journeys of 1682 and 1683 through Eastern Tartary, relates what a Jesuit in Persia heard from an Armenian priest who had travelled in Tibet, and from another Armenian traveller, a wise and reliable man, who had passed four years in the country, and whose narrative is so much the more trustworthy, as it agrees perfectly with Grueber's account.

These informants had related that in Asia were two kingdoms with the name Tibet, the Little and the Great. Little Tibet borders on Cachemir of which Bernier had given such a favourable description. But Little Tibet is sterile, and has a cold climate, and very poor inhabitants. Great Tibet which some call Tebat and others Boutan, borders on Chinese Tartary. It is not more agreeable nor more fertile than Little Tibet. There are excellent fishes in the rivers, and there is any amount of milk. Tibet abounds in musk, and in gold, though the natives do not understand how to work in the mines. The air is excellent, and the inhabitants are strong. Lassa is the capital and only city of Tibet; a mandarin sent by the Emperor resides there. Verbiest says that it is three months' journey from Tibet to this city (Lassa), which is situated at the foot of the great wall; the informant must have said that it is three months' journey from the great wall to Lhasa. The whole way one crosses an utterly desolate country where only wild animals are to be found, but several caravans pass between Tibet and China. The greatest man in Tibet is the Grand Lama, »Pontife des Lamas», who certainly is the famous Priester John.¹

The great Father GERBILLON who, from 1688 to 1698 made eight journeys through eastern Mongolia, either alone or with Father PEREIRA, or even with Emperor KANG HI, gives us some excellent news about Tibet and surrounding countries, far superior to anything existing before this time. Though Gerbillon had never been in Tibet his description of the road from Koko-nor to Lhasa is much better than that of Father Grueber. The vertical plastic which is not mentioned in Grue-

¹ Recueil de Voiages au Nord. Tome Troisieme, Amsterdam MDCCXV, p. 338.