

compartment to another. They then stop the leak and replace the lading.]

The fastenings are all of good iron nails and the sides are double, one plank laid over the other, and caulked outside and in. The planks are not pitched, for those people do not have any pitch, but they daub the sides with another matter, deemed by them far better than pitch; it is this. You see they take some lime and some chopped hemp, and these they knead together with a certain wood-oil; and when the three are thoroughly amalgamated, they hold like any glue. And with this mixture they do paint their ships.

Each of their great ships requires at least 200 mariners [some of them 300]. They are indeed of great size, for one ship shall carry 5000 or 6000 baskets of pepper [and they used formerly to be larger than they are now]. And aboard these ships, you must know, when there is no wind they use sweeps, and these sweeps are so big that to pull them requires four mariners to each. Every great ship has certain large barks or tenders attached to it; these are large enough to carry 1000 baskets of pepper, and carry 50 or 60 mariners apiece [some of them 80 or 100], and they are likewise moved by oars; they assist the great ship by towing her, at such times as her sweeps are in use [or even when she is under sail, if the wind be somewhat on the beam; not if the wind be astern, for then the sails of the big ship would take the wind out of those of the tenders, and she would run them down]. Each ship has two [or three] of these barks, but one is bigger than the others. There are also some ten [small] boats for the service of each great ship, to lay out the anchors, catch fish, bring supplies aboard, and the like. When the ship is under sail she carries these boats slung to her sides. And the large tenders have their boats in like manner.

When the ship has been a year in work and they wish to repair her, they nail on a third plank over the first two,

and caulk and pay it well; and when another repair is wanted they nail on yet another plank, and so on year by year as it is required. Howbeit, they do this only for a certain number of years, and till there are six thicknesses of planking. When a ship has come to have six planks on her sides, one over the other, they take her no more on the high seas, but make use of her for coasting as long as she will last, and then they break her up.

Now that I have told you about the ships which sail upon the Ocean Sea and among the Isles of India, let us proceed to speak of the various wonders of India; but first and foremost I must tell you about a number of Islands that there are in that part of the Ocean Sea where we now are, I mean the Islands lying to the eastward. So let us begin with an Island which is called Chipangu.

CHAPTER II

DESCRIPTION OF THE ISLAND OF CHIPANGU, AND THE GREAT KHAN'S DESPATCH OF A HOST AGAINST IT

CHIPANGU is an Island towards the east in the high seas, 1500 miles distant from the Continent; and a very great Island it is.

The people are white, civilized, and well-favoured. They are Idolaters, and are dependent on nobody. And I can tell you the quantity of gold they have is endless; for they find it in their own Islands, [and the King does not allow it to be exported. Moreover] few merchants visit the country because it is so far from the mainland, and thus it comes to pass that their gold is abundant beyond all measure.

I will tell you a wonderful thing about the Palace of the Lord of that Island. You must know that he hath a great Palace which is entirely roofed with fine gold, just as our churches are roofed with lead, insomuch that it would scarcely be possible to estimate its value. More-

over, all the pavement of the Palace, and the floors of its chambers, are entirely of gold, in plates like slabs of stone, a good two fingers thick; and the windows also are of gold, so that altogether the richness of this Palace is past all bounds and all belief.

They have also pearls in abundance, which are of a rose colour, but fine, big, and round, and quite as valuable as the white ones. [In this Island some of the dead are buried, and others are burnt. When a body is burnt, they put one of these pearls in the mouth, for such is their custom.] They have also quantities of other precious stones.

Kublai, the Grand Khan who now reigneth, having heard much of the immense wealth that was in this Island, formed a plan to get possession of it. For this purpose he sent two of his Barons with a great navy, and a great force of horse and foot. These Barons were able and valiant men, one of them called ABACAN and the other VONSAINCHIN, and they weighed with all their company from the ports of Zayton and Kinsay, and put out to sea. They sailed until they reached the Island aforesaid, and there they landed, and occupied the open country and the villages, but did not succeed in getting possession of any city or castle. And so a disaster befel them, as I shall now relate.

You must know that there was much ill-will between those two Barons, so that one would do nothing to help the other. And it came to pass that there arose a north wind which blew with great fury, and caused great damage along the coasts of that Island, for its harbours were few. It blew so hard that the Great Khan's fleet could not stand against it. And when the chiefs saw that, they came to the conclusion that if the ships remained where they were the whole navy would perish. So they all got on board and made sail to leave the country. But when they had gone about four miles they came to a small Island, on which they were driven ashore in spite of all they could do; and a large part of the fleet was wrecked,

and a great multitude of the force perished, so that there escaped only some 30,000 men, who took refuge on this Island.

These held themselves for dead men, for they were without food, and knew not what to do, and they were in great despair when they saw that such of the ships as had escaped the storm were making full sail for their own country without the slightest sign of turning back to help them. And this was because of the bitter hatred between the two Barons in command of the force; for the Baron who escaped never showed the slightest desire to return to his colleague who was left upon the Island in the way you have heard; though he might easily have done so after the storm ceased; and it endured not long. He did nothing of the kind, however, but made straight for home. And you must know that the Island to which the soldiers had escaped was uninhabited; there was not a creature upon it but themselves.

Now we will tell you what befel those who escaped on the fleet, and also those who were left upon the Island.

CHAPTER III

WHAT FURTHER CAME OF THE GREAT KHAN'S EXPEDITION AGAINST CHIPANGU

You see those who were left upon the Island, some 30,000 souls, as I have said, did hold themselves for dead men, for they saw no possible means of escape. And when the King of the Great Island got news how the one part of the expedition had saved themselves upon that Isle, and the other part was scattered and fled, he was right glad thereat, and he gathered together all the ships of his territory and proceeded with them, the sea now being calm, to the little Isle, and landed his troops all round it. And when the Tartars saw them thus arrive, and the whole force landed, without any guard having been left on board

the ships (the act of men very little acquainted with such work), they had the sagacity to feign flight. [Now the Island was very high in the middle, and whilst the enemy were hastening after them by one road they fetched a compass by another and] in this way managed to reach the enemy's ships and to get aboard of them. This they did easily enough, for they encountered no opposition.

Once they were on board they got under weigh immediately for the great Island, and landed there, carrying with them the standards and banners of the King of the Island; and in this wise they advanced to the capital. The garrison of the city, suspecting nothing wrong, when they saw their own banners advancing supposed that it was their own host returning, and so gave them admittance. The Tartars as soon as they had got in seized all the bulwarks and drove out all who were in the place except the pretty women, and these they kept for themselves. In this way the Great Khan's people got possession of the city.

When the King of the great Island and his army perceived that both fleet and city were lost, they were greatly cast down; howbeit, they got away to the great Island on board some of the ships which had not been carried off. And the King then gathered all his host to the siege of the city, and invested it so straitly that no one could go in or come out. Those who were within held the place for seven months, and strove by all means to send word to the Great Khan; but it was all in vain, they never could get the intelligence carried to him. So when they saw they could hold out no longer they gave themselves up, on condition that their lives should be spared, but still that they should never quit the Island. And this befel in the year of our Lord 1279. The Great Khan ordered the Baron who had fled so disgracefully to lose his head. And afterwards he caused the other also, who had been left on the Island, to be put to death, for he had never behaved as a good soldier ought to do.

But I must tell you a wonderful thing that I had forgotten, which happened on this expedition.

You see, at the beginning of the affair, when the Khan's people had landed on the great Island and occupied the open country as I told you, they stormed a tower belonging to some of the islanders who refused to surrender, and they cut off the heads of all the garrison except eight; on these eight they found it impossible to inflict any wound! Now this was by virtue of certain stones which they had in their arms inserted between the skin and the flesh, with such skill as not to show at all externally. And the charm and virtue of these stones was such that those who wore them could never perish by steel. So when the Barons learned this they ordered the men to be beaten to death with clubs. And after their death the stones were extracted from the bodies of all, and were greatly prized.

Now the story of the discomfiture of the Great Khan's folk came to pass as I have told you. But let us have done with that matter, and return to our subject.

CHAPTER IV

CONCERNING THE FASHION OF THE IDOLS

Now you must know that the Idols of Cathay, and of Manzi, and of this Island, are all of the same class. And in this Island as well as elsewhere, there be some of the Idols that have the head of an ox, some that have the head of a pig, some of a dog, some of a sheep, and some of divers other kinds. And some of them have four heads, whilst some have three, one growing out of either shoulder. There are also some that have four hands, some ten, some a thousand! And they do put more faith in those Idols that have a thousand hands than in any of the others. And when any Christian asks them why they make their Idols in so many different guises, and