ITINERARIO

de Ludovico de Varthema Bolognese
nelle Egitto nella Suria nella Arabia dextra
ta & felice nella Persia nella India & nel
la Ethiopia. La fede di tutte le predette Pro,
tunc con Gratia & Pri
utile e di nota

Stampato in Roma per maestro Stephano guilli
rati de Lorenzo & maestro Hercule de Nana
Bolognesi ad usurpia de maestro Lo
doncor de Henricis da Corneto
Vicetino. Nel Anno M.
D.Xxiv: de De
cembrio.

FACSIMILE OF THE TITLE-PAGE AND
COLLECTION OF VARTHENA'S ORIGINAL BOOK, 1510
THE ITINERARY OF LUDOVICO DI VARTHHEMA
OF BOLOGNA

[PRIVILEGE]

[TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN
BY G. F. BADGER]

Raphael, by Divine grace, Bishop of Porto, in the Roman Church, to all and singular, by whatever name
called, and with whatsoever dignity or office invested, and to all others
whom it does or may concern, to whom these our letters may come,—
Peace to the Lord for ever.

Whereas among other subjects and sciences which, as well by the
inspiration of genius as by art and experience, promote the benefit, use-
fulness, and enjoyment of mankind, and by transmission from hand to
hand are enlarged and illustrated, the description and measurement of
the world and of parts of the earth, which the Greeks call Cosmography,
Geography, Topography, Geometry, and other like names, do not hold
the last place, and yield no less pleasure than profit; on which account
those who have devoted themselves to such studies have always been held
in the highest honour, and have been abundantly rewarded.—Therefore,
whereas our well-beloved friend Ludovico Vartomanus of Bologna, who
(as we are assured) has for the space of seven years travelled over the most
remote and hardly-known regions of Asia and Africa, and has largely
written in the vernacular tongue of their sites, seas, rivers, pools, lakes,
forests, mountains, cities, lands, people, and their established manners,
rites, laws, and other memorable things, and has corrected many places,
(as one may well do who sees all with his own eyes, and has not merely
heard thereof or received it from others,) in Ptolemy, Strabo, Pliny, and
other most famous writers, and has also added much to what others have
written thereon up to this time.—It is our pleasure, being moreover
advised thereto by many other Most Reverend Cardinals of the Apostolic
See, that what he has committed to writing and collected into a volume,
should be printed for the public use and study of the things therein
contained, and that it should be held worthy, not only of praise and
commendation, but of ample reward. We, being desirous (as is meet) to
assist him as far as we are able, and to recompense his industry with all
due favours, do, by these presents, proclaim, decree, and inhibit, in virtue
of a mandate from our Most Holy Lord the Pope in person, communicated to us by word of mouth to that effect, and by the authority of our Chamberlain's office, that all Printers who shall be applied to by the said Ludovico, that they print his writings on his own request or that of any of his heirs; and that all other Printers abstain from printing them, and that no Printers or persons of any other condition whatsoever, either of themselves, or through any other or others, shall dare or presume to sell the printed books or volumes of the said Ludovico, without the consent of the said Ludovico or of his acknowledged heirs, for the space of ten years to come, to be reckoned from the date of their first impression; and, further, that they lend no aid, counsel or countenance, to either Printers or Venders of the same, against the wishes of the said Ludovico and his heirs, under the penalty of one hundred ducats of gold to be exacted for every counterfeit and from every one so counterfeiting, without any other declaration of the fact, through the medium of the Apostolic Chamber, to be applied to the use of the said Ludovico or his heirs. We further command and inhibit, under the same penalty, all those whom it may concern, that this our edict, decree, and will, be executed in like manner at the instance of the said Ludovico, or of his successors and heirs, for the space of the aforesaid ten years, against all and every one who, in any manner, or under any pretext, shall be guilty of counterfeits—the Apostolical constitutions, ordinances, statutes, and customs, even when confirmed by oath, also the privileges and licenses granted to any persons whatsoever, under any words or form of words, notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, at our Palace of Saint Laurence in Damaso, the xvith day of November, M.D.X., with the usual seal of our Chamberlain's office appended.

MATHEUS RONFINIS
Secretarius

THE ITINERARY OF
LUDOVICO DI VARTHHEMA
OF BOLOGNA

[DEDICATION]

To

THE MOST ILLUSTRIUS AND MOST EXCELLENT
LADY THE COUNTESS OF ALBI AND DUCHESS OF
TAGLIAZZO, MADAME AGNESINA FELTRIA
COLONNA, LUDOVICO DI VARTHHEMA
OF BOLOGNA WISHES HEALTH

There have been many men who have devoted themselves to the investigation of the things of this world, and by the aid of divers studies, journeys, and very exact relations, have endeavoured to accomplish their desire. Others, again, of more perspicacious understandings, to whom the earth has not sufficed, such as the Chaldeans and Phoenicians, have begun to traverse the highest regions of Heaven with careful observations and watchings; from all which I know that each has gained most deserved and high praise from others and abundant satisfaction to themselves. Wherefore I, feeling a very great desire for similar results, and leaving alone the Heavens as a burden more suitable for the shoulders of Atlas and of Hercules, determined to investigate some small portion of this our terrestrial globe; and not having any inclination (knowing myself to be of very slender understanding) to arrive at my desire by study or conjectures, I determined, personally, and with my own eyes, to endeavour to ascertain the situations of places, the qualities of peoples, the diversities of animals, the varieties of the fruit-bearing and odoriferous trees of Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Felix, Persia, India and Ethiopia, remembering well that the testimony of our eye-witness is worth more than ten heard-says. Having then, by Divine assistance, in part accomplished my object and examined various provinces and foreign nations, it appeared to me that I had done nothing if I kept hidden within myself the things I had witnessed and experienced, instead of communicating them to other studious men. Wherefore I be thought myself to give a very faithful description of this my voyage, according to my humble abilities, thinking thereby to do an action which would be agreeable to my readers; for that, whereas I procured the pleasure of seeing
new manners and customs by very great dangers and insuppor
table fatigue, they will enjoy the same advantage and pleasure, without dis
comfort or danger, by merely reading. Reflecting, then, to whom I might
best address this my laborious little work, you, Most Illustrious and Most
Excellent Lady, occurred to me as being a special observer of noteworthy
things, and a lover of every virtue. Nor did my judgment appear to me
vain, considering the infused learning transferred by the radiant light of
that Most Illustrious and Excellent Lord the Duke of Urbino your Father,
being as it were to us a sun of arms and of science. I do not speak of the
very Excellent Lord your Brother, who (although still a young man) has
so distinguished himself in his Latin and Greek studies as to be spoken of
as almost a Demosthenes and a Cicero. Wherefore, having derived
every virtue from such broad and clear streams, you cannot do other than
take pleasure in honourable works and entertain a great desire for them.
He who can duly appreciate them, would willingly go with his corporeal
feet where he flies with the wings of his mind, remembering that one of
the praises awarded to the most wise and eloquent Ulysses was, that he
had seen many customs of men and many countries. But as your Lady-
ship is occupied with the affairs of your Most Illustrious Lord and Consort
(whom, like another Artemisia, you love and respect), and about the
distinguished family which, with admirable rule, you adorn by your
graces, I say it will suffice if amongst your other good works you will feed
your mind with this fruitful, although perhaps, unpolished reading, not
acting like many other ladies who lend their ears to light songs and vain
words, taking no account of time, unlike the angelic mind of your Lady-
ship, which allows no moment to pass without some good fruit. Your
kindness will easily supply all want of skill in the connection of the
narrative, grasping only the truth of the facts. And if these, my labours,
should prove agreeable to you and meet with your approbation, I shall
consider that I have received sufficient praise and satisfaction for my long
wanderings, my rather fearful exile, during which I have endured,
inaumerable times, hunger and thirst, cold and heat, war, imprisonment,
and an infinite number of other dangerous inconveniences, and shall gain
fresh courage for that other journey which I hope to undertake in a short
time; for having examined some parts of the countries and islands of the
cast, south, and west, I am resolved, if it please God, to investigate those
of the north. And thus, as I do not see that I am fit for any other pursuit,
to spend in this praiseworthy exercise the remainder of my fleeting days.

THE ITINERARY OF LUDOVICO DI VARTHHEMA

CHAPTER I

CONCERNING EGYPT AND SYRIA

I had the same desire to behold the various kingdoms of the world which
has urged on others, excited me also to a similar enterprise; and
inasmuch as all countries have been very much laid open by our
people, I deliberated in my own mind that I would see those which had
been the least frequented by the Venetians. Wherefore spreading our
sails to a favourable wind, and having implored the Divine aid, we
committed ourselves to the sea. When we came to Alexandria, a city of
Egypt, I longed for novelty (as a thirsty man longs for fresh water)
departed from these places as being well known to all, and, entering the
Nile, arrived at Cairo.

§ On my arrival in Cairo I, who had been previously much astonished
at the account of its size, came to the conclusion that it was not so large
as it had been reported to be. But its size in circumference is about equal
to that of Rome. It is true, however, that it contains very many more
habitations than there are in Rome, and that the population is larger.
The mistake which many have made is this, that there are several hamlets
outside the walls of Cairo which some believed to be within the circuit
of Cairo itself; this, however, cannot be the case, for they are distant some
two or three miles, and are distinct villages. I shall not enter into any
long account of their faith and manners, because everyone knows that
they are inhabited by Moors, and the Mamelukes [mamālik], the
lord over them is the Grand Sultan Kamāl al-Dīn, who is served by
the Mamelukes, and the Mamelukes are lords over the Moors.

§ I say nothing about the riches and beauty of the aforesaid Cairo and
of the pride of the Mamelukes, because they are well known to all our
countrymen. I sailed thence into Syria; and first to Barut [Beyrou],
the distance from the one place to the other by sea is 500 miles. In that
Barut I remained several days. It is a country thickly inhabited by the
Moors, and is well supplied with everything. The sea breaks against the
walls, and you must know that the district is not entirely surrounded by
walls, but only in some parts, that is to say, towards the west and towards
the sea. I did not see anything there worthy to be recorded, excepting
an ancient building, which, they say, was inhabited by the daughter of
the king when the dragon wanted to devour her, and where St. George
killed the said dragon. This ancient building is all in ruins; and I departed thence, and proceeded in the direction of Tripoli in Syria, which is two days' journey towards the east. This Tripoli is subject to the Grand Sultan [Kânîstîh al-Ghôrî], and all are Mahomedans, and the said city abounds in everything. And I departed thence and went to Aleppo, which is eight days' journey inland, which said Aleppo is a very beautiful city, and is under the Grand Sultan of Cairo, and is the mart [scole] of Turkey and Syria, and they are all Mahomedans. It is a country of very great traffic in merchandise, and particularly with the Persians and Azamîn [‘Ajam], Persian subjects, who come as far as there. This is the route which is taken to go into Turkey and Syria by those who come from Azemia ['Ajam, Pênia].

And I departed thence and went towards Damascus, which is distant ten short days' journey. Midway there is a city which is called Aman [Hamâ], in which there grows a vast quantity of cotton, and very good fruit. And near to Damascus, sixteen miles distant from it, I found another district called Menîn [Menin], which is situated on the summit of a mountain, and is inhabited by Christians of the Greek Church, who are subjects of the lord of Damascus. In this place there are two very beautiful churches, which are said to have been erected by Helena, the mother of Constantine. Very excellent fruits grow there, and most especially good grapes; and here also there are very beautiful gardens and fountains. I departed thence, and went to the most noble city of Damascus.

Truly it would not be possible to describe the beauty and the excellence of this Damascus, in which I resided some months in order to learn the Moorish [Arabic] language, because this city is entirely inhabited by Moors and Mamelukes and many Greek Christians. Here I must give an account of the government of the lord of the said city, which lord is subject to the Great Sultan of Cairo. You must know that in the said city of Damascus there is a very beautiful and strong castle, which is said to have been built by a Florentine Mameluke at his own expense, he being lord of the said city. And, moreover, in each angle of the said castle, the arms of Florence are sculptured in marble. It is surrounded by very wide fosses, and has four extremely strong towers and drawbridges, and powerful and excellent artillery are constantly mounted there. Fifty Mamelukes, in the service of the Grand Sultan, are constantly quartered with the governor of the castle. This Florentine was a Mameluke of the Grand Sultan; and it is reported that in his time the Sultan was poisoned, and could find no one who could relieve him of the said poison, when it pleased God that this Florentine should cure him.

For this service he gave him the said city of Damascus, and thus he came to build the castle. Afterwards he died in Damascus; and the people held him in great veneration as a holy man, possessing great knowledge, and from that time forward the castle has always been in the possession of the Sultan. When a new Sultan succeeds to the throne, one of his lords, who are called Amirra [Amîr, Enâr], says to him: "Lord, I have been for so long a time your slave, give me Damascus, and I will give you one hundred thousand, or two hundred thousand teraphim [teraphim, akhrafî, ducat] of gold." Then the lord grants him this favour. But you must know, that if in the course of two years the said lord does not send him 25,000 teraphim, he seeks to kill him by force of arms, or in some other manner; but if he makes him the said present, he remains in the government. The said lord has always ten or twelve lords and barons of the said city with him, and when the Sultan wants two or three hundred thousand teraphim from the lords or merchants of the said city, who are not treated with justice, but whom they vie with each other in oppressing by robbery and assassination (for the Moors live under the Mamelukes like the lamb under the wolf), the said Sultan sends two letters to the governor of the said castle, one of which simply enjoin him to bring together in the castle such lords or merchants as he may think proper. And when they are assembled, the second letter is read, the object of which is immediately carried out, whether for good or for evil. And in this manner the said lord seeks to obtain money. Sometimes the said lord becomes so powerful that he will not go into the castle; whereat many barons and merchants, feeling themselves in danger, mount their horses and retire towards Turkey. We will say no more upon this subject, excepting that the men of the guard of the said castle, in each of the four great towers, are always on the watch. They make no cry during the night, but each has a drum, made in the shape of a half-box, upon which they beat vigorously with a stick, and each answers the other with these said drums. He who delays answering for the space of a pater noster, is imprisoned for a year.

Now that we have seen the customs of the Lord of Damascus, it is necessary that I should make mention of some circumstances relating to the city, which is extremely populous and very rich. It is impossible to imagine the richness and elegance of the workmanship there. Here you have a great abundance of grain and of meat, and the most prolific country for fruits that was ever seen, and especially for fresh grapes, during all seasons. I will mention the good and the bad fruits which grow there. Pomegranates and quinces, good: almonds and large olives, extremely good. The most beautiful white and red roses that were ever
seen. There are also good apples and pears and peaches, but with a very bad taste, the reason of which is that Damascus abounds much in water. A stream runs through the city, and the greater number of the houses have very beautiful fountains of mosaic work. The houses are dirty externally, but within they are very beautiful, adorned with many works of marble and porphyry.

 parfait, is as large as St. Peter’s at Rome. It has no roof in the centre, but the surrounding parts are covered in. It is reported that they keep there the body of St. Zacharias the prophet, and they pay him very great honour. In the said mosque there are four principal doors of metal, and within there are many fountains. Again, we see where the canonica stood, which belonged formerly to the Christians, in which canonica there are many ancient works in mosaic. Again, I saw the place where they report that Christ said to St. Paul, “Saul, Saul, cui me pers queris?” which is without the city, about a mile from one of the gates thereof. They bury there all the Christians who die in the said city. Again, there is that tower in the wall of the district where (as they say) St. Paul was imprisoned. The Moors have many times rebuilt it, but in the morning it is found broken and thrown down, as the angel broke it when he drew St. Paul out of the said tower. I also saw the house where (as they say) Cain slew Abel his brother, which is a mile without the city in the opposite direction, on the side of a hill in a large deep valley. We will now turn to the liberty which the said Mamelukes enjoy in the said city of Damascus.

 The Mamelukes are renegade Christians, who have been purchased by the said lord. Certain it is that the said Mamelukes never lose any time, but are constantly exercising themselves either in arms or in letters, in order that they may acquire excellence. And you must know that every Mameluke, great or little, has for his pay six saraphi per month, and his expenses for himself, his horse, and a family; and they have as much more when they are engaged on any warlike expedition. The said Mamelukes, when they go about the city, are always in companies of two or three, as it would be a great disgrace if they went alone. If they accidentally meet two or three ladies, they possess this privilege, or if they do not possess it they take it: they go to lay in wait for these ladies in certain places like great inns, which are called chano (khan), and as the said ladies pass before the door each Mameluke takes his lady by the hand, draws her in, and does what he will with her. But the lady resists being known, because they all wear the face covered, so that they know us, but we do not know them. The Mameluke says to her, that he wishes to know who she is, and she replies: “Brother, is it not enough that you do with me what you will, without desiring to know who I am?” and she entreats him so much that he lets her go. And sometimes they think that they take the daughter of the lord, when in fact they take their own wives; and this has happened while I was there. These ladies go very well clad in silk, and over it they wear certain white garments of wool, thin and bright like silk, and they all wear white buskins and red or purple shoes, and many jewels around their heads, and in their ears, and on their hands. These ladies when they are married, at their own will and pleasure, that is, when they do not wish to remain with their husbands any longer, go to the cadis of their faith and cause themselves to be talācara (talak, divorce), that is, to be separated from their husband; and then they take another, and he takes another wife. Although they say that the Moors have five or six wives, I for my part have never seen any who had more than two or three at the most. These Moors for the greater part eat in the streets, that is, where the clothes are sold; they have their food cooked and eat it there, and there are very many horses, camels, and buffalo[es], and sheep and goats. There is here an abundance of good fresh cheese; and if you wish to purchase milk, there are forty or fifty goats, which go every day through the district, and which have ears more than a span in length. The master of these goats takes them up into your chamber, even if your house have three stories, and there in your presence he milks as much as you please into a handsome tin vessel. And there are many milk girls. Here, again, is sold a great quantity of truffles; sometimes twenty-five or thirty camels arrive laden with them, and in three or four days they are sold. They come from the mountains of Armenia and Turkey. The said Moors go clothed in certain long and wide garments, without girdles, made of silk or cloth, and the greater number wear breeches of wood and white shoes. When a Moor meets a Mameluke, although he may be the principal merchant of the place, he is obliged to do honour and give place to the Mameluke, and if he do not so he is bastinadoed. The Christians have there many warehouses, which contain cloths, and silk and satin, velvets, and brass, and all merchandise that is required; but they are ill treated.
CHAPTER II
CONCERNING ARABIA DESERTA

The matters relating to Damascus having been here described perhaps more diffusely than was necessary, opportunity invites me to resume my journey. In 1503, on the 8th day of April, the caravan being set in order to go to Mecca, and I being desirous of beholding various scenes and not knowing how to set about it, formed a great friendship with the captain of the said Mamelukes of the caravan, who was a Christian renegade, so that he clothed me like a Mameluke and gave me a good horse, and placed me in company with the other Mamelukes, and this was accomplished by means of the money and other things which I gave him; and in this manner we set ourselves on the way, and travelled three days to a place which is called Mezeribe [al-Mazarib], and there we remained three days, in order that the merchants might provide themselves, by purchase, with as many horses as they required. In this Mezeribe there is a lord who is named Zambel [az-Za'bî], and he is lord of the country, that is to say, of the Arabians; which Zambel has three brothers and four male children, and he has 40,000 horses, and for his court he has 10,000 mares. And he has here 300,000 camels, for his pasture-ground extends two days' journey. And this lord Zambel, when he thinks proper, wages war with the Sultan of Cairo, and the Lord of Damascus and of Jerusalem, and sometimes, in harvest time, when they think that he is a hundred miles distant, he plans some morning a great incursion to the granaries of the said city, and finds the grain and the barley nicely packed up in sacks, and carries it off. Sometimes he runs a whole day and night with his said mares without stopping, and when they have arrived at the end of their journey they give them camels' milk to drink, because it is very refreshing. Truly it appears to me that they do not run but that they fly like falcons; for I have been with them, and you must know that they ride, for the most part, without saddles, and in their shirts, excepting some of their principal men. Their arms consist of a lance of Indian cane ten or twelve cubits in length with a piece of iron at the end, and when they go on any expedition they keep as close together as starlings. The said Arabians are very small men, and are of a dark tawny colour, and they have a feminine voice, and long, stiff, and black hair. And truly these Arabs are in such vast numbers that they cannot be counted, and they are constantly fighting amongst themselves. They inhabit the mountain and come down at the time when the caravan passes through to go to Mecca, in order to lie in wait at the passes for the purpose of robbing the said caravan. They carry their wives, children, and all their furniture, and also their houses, upon camels, which houses are like the tents of soldiers, and are of black wool and of a sad appearance.

On the 11th of April, the said caravan departed from Mezeribe; there were 55,000 camels, about 40,000 persons, and we were sixty Mamelukes in guard of the said caravan. One third of the Mamelukes went in advance of the caravan with the standard, another third in the centre, and the other third marched in the rear. You must understand that we performed our journey in this wise. From Damascus to Mecca is a journey of forty days and forty nights; thus, we set out from Mezeribe in the morning and travelled for twenty hours. At that point certain signals made by the captain were passed from hand to hand that the whole company should stop where they then found themselves, and they pass twenty-four hours in unloading, and feeding themselves and their camels. And then they make signals, and the camels are immediately laden again. And you must know that they give the said camels for food only five loaves of barley-meal, uncooked, and each of about the size of a pomegranate, and then they mount their horses and journey all night and all the following day for the said twenty-two [six] hours, and then for twenty-four hours do as before. And every eight days they find water, that is, by digging in the earth or sand; also, certain wells and cisterns are found, and at the end of the eight days they stop for one or two days, because the said camels carry as great a burden as two mules, and they only give the poor animals drink once in every three days. When we halted at the said waters we always had to fight with a vast number of Arabs, but they never killed more than one man and one lady, for such is the baseness of their minds, that we sixty Mamelukes were sufficient defence against forty or fifty thousand Arabs; for pagans, there are no better people with arms in their hands than are the Mamelukes. You must know that I had excellent experiences of these Mamelukes during the journey. Amongst others, I saw a Mameluke take one of his slaves and place a pomegranate on his head, and make him stand twelve or fifteen paces distant from him, and at the second trial strike off the pomegranate by a shot from a bow. Again, I saw another Mameluke, running at full gallop, take off his saddle and place it upon his head, and afterwards return it to its original place without falling, and always at full gallop. Their saddles are made according to our usage.

And when we had travelled twelve days we found the valley of Sodom
and Gomorrah. Verily the Scriptures do not lie, for one sees how they were destroyed by a miracle of God; and I say that there are three cities which were on the top of three mountains, and around them to the height of three or four cubits is still seen what appears to be blood, like red wax mixed with earth. Of a truth, I believe, upon what I have seen, that they were a wicked people, for all around the entire country is desert and barren. The earth produces no one thing, nor water; and they lived upon manna and were punished, for not acknowledging the benefits they received; and by a miracle everything is still seen in ruin. Then we passed that valley, which was at least twenty miles, and there died there from thirst thirty-three persons, and many were buried in the sand who were not quite dead, and they left only their faces uncovered. Afterwards we found a little mountain, near which was a well, whereby we were well pleased. We halted upon the said mountain. The next day, early in the morning, there came 24,000 Arabs, who said that we must pay for their water. We answered that we could not pay, for the water was given by God. They began to fight with us, saying that we had taken their water. We fortified ourselves, and made a wall of our camels, and the merchants stood within the said camels, and we were constantly skirmishing, so that they kept us besieged two days and two nights, and things came at last to that state, that neither we nor they had any more water to drink. They had completely surrounded the mountain with people, saying that they would break through the caravan. Not being able to continue the fighting, our captain consulted with the Moorish merchants and we gave them (the Arabs) 1200 ducats of gold. They took the money, and then said that 10,000 ducats of gold would not pay for their water, and we knew that they wanted something else besides money. So our prudent captain arranged with the caravan, that all those men who were capable of bearing arms should not ride on the camels, and that each should prepare his arms. The morning having come, we put forward all the caravan, and we Mamelukes remained behind. We were in all three hundred persons, and we soon began to fight. One man and one lady were killed by bows on our side, and they did us no further harm. We killed of them 1600 persons. Nor is it to be wondered at that we killed so many of them: the cause was, that they were all naked and on horseback, without saddles, so that they had a difficulty in turning on their way.

At the end of eight days we found a mountain [Khahr] which appeared to be ten or twelve miles in circumference, in which mountain there dwell four or five thousand Jews, who go naked, and are in height five or six spans, and have a feminine voice, and are more black than any other colour. They live entirely upon the flesh of sheep, and eat nothing else. They are circumcised, and confess that they are Jews; and if they can get a Moor into their hands, they skin him alive. At the foot of the said mountain we found a tank of water, which is water that falls in the rainy season. We loaded with the said water 16,000 camels, whereat the Jews were ill-pleased; and they went about that mountain like wild goats, and on no account would they descend into the plain, because they are mortal enemies of the Moors. At the foot of the mountain, by the said water, there were six or eight feet of beautiful thornbushes, in which we found two turtledoves, which circumstance appeared to us like a miracle, insomuch as we had travelled fifteen days and nights and had not met with a single animal or bird. The next day we resumed our journey, and in two days’ time arrived at a city which is called Medinatulnabi [Medina: Medinatul-n-Nabi, the City of the Prophet]. Near that city, at a distance of four miles, we found a well, by which the caravan halted for a day, and at this well each person washed himself, and put on clean linen to go into the said city, which contains about three hundred hearths, and is surrounded by walls made of earth. The houses within are constructed with stone walls. The country around the said city lies under the curse of God, for the land is barren, with the exception that about two stones’ cast, outside the city, there are about fifty or sixty feet of palm trees in a garden, at the end of which there is a certain conduit of water, which descends at least twenty-four steps, of which water the caravan takes possession when it arrives there. Now, some who say that the body of Mahomet is suspended in the air at Mecca must be reproved; I say that it is not true. I have seen his sepulchre in this city, Medinatulnabi, in which we remained three days, and wished to see everything. The first day we went into the city, at the entrance by the door of their mosque, and each of us, small or great, was obliged to be accompanied by some person, who took us by the hand, and led us where Mahomet was buried.

The mosque is made square in this manner; being about one hundred paces long, and eighty wide, and it has around it two doors on three sides, and the roof made arched, and there are more than 400 columns made of burnt stone, all whitened, and there are about 9,000 lighted lamps burning on one side of the arches. On the right hand, at the head of the mosque, there is a square tower, about five paces on every side, which tower has a cloth of silk around it. At the distance of two paces from the said tower there is a very beautiful grating of metal, where persons stand to see the said tower; and at one side, on the left, there is a little door which leads you to the said tower, and in the said tower there is another
little door, and by one of the doors there are about twenty books, and on
the other side there are twenty-five books, which are those of Mahomet
and of his Companions, which books declare his life and the command-
ments of his sect. Within the said door there is a sepulchre, that is, a pit
under ground, wherein was placed Mahomet, also Haly, and Babacher,
and Othman, and Aumar, and Fatoma [Muhammad, 'Ali, Abubakr,
'Othman, 'Umar, Fatima]. Mahomet was captain, and he was an Arab.
Haly was son-in-law of Mahomet, that is, he was the husband of Fatoma,
who was the daughter of Mahomet. Babacher was he of whom we should
say that he was cardinal, and wanted to be pope. Othman was one of his
captains. Aumar was another of his captains. And these said books treat
about each of his people, that is, of the said captains; and on this account
it is that this censee cut each other to pieces, for some wish to act accord-
ing to the commandments of one, and some of another, and thus they
do not know how to make up their minds; and they kill each other like
beasts about these heresies, for they are all false.

In order to explain the sect of Mahomet, you must know that over
the said tower there is a cupola, in which you can walk round the top,
that is, outside. You must understand the trick they played off upon
the whole caravan the first evening we arrived at the tomb of Mahomet.
Our captain sent for the superior of the said mosque, to whom he said:
that he should show him the body of Nabi—this Nabi means the Prophet
Mahomet—that he would give him three thousand scaramaph of gold;
and that he had neither father nor mother, nor brothers nor sisters, nor
wife nor children, neither had he come to purchase spices or jewels, but
that he had come to save his soul, and to see the body of the Prophet.
Then the superior answered him with great violence, and rage, and pride,
saying: "How do those eyes of yours, which have done so much evil in
the world, desire to see him for whom God has created the heavens and
the earth?" Then answered our captain: "Sidi intesate el molia," that is to
say, "Sir, you say true; but do me a favour, let me see the body of the
Prophet, and immediately that I have seen it, I will pull out my eyes
for the love of him." And Sidi [for Sheriff or head of the mosque] answered:
"O Sir, I will tell you the truth. It is true that our Prophet wished to die
here, in order to set us a good example; for he could well have died at
Mecca had he so willed, but he desired to exercise poverty for our
instruction; and as soon as he was dead, he was carried at once into heaven
by the angels, and he says that he is equal with God." Our captain said to
him: "Etsi Hidena Marian phinou?" that is, "Jesus Christ the son of Mary,
where is he?" The Sidi answered: "Azafel el Nabi," that is, "at the feet of
Mahomet." Our captain answered: "Bethes, bisiti," that is, "enough,
enough! I will not know more." Then the captain came out and said to
us: "See where I wanted to throw away three thousand scaramaph!"
In the night time, at three o'clock, there came into the camp about ten
or twelve of those old men of that sect, for the caravan was encamped
near the gate, two stones' cast off, and these old men began to cry out,
some in one part and some in another: "Leila ilaloe, Mahomet resulata;
am Nabi, his la, his resulata, fasfora;" that is, "God pardon me. "Leila
ilaloe," means, "God was, God will be"; and "Mahomet resulata" is,
"Mahomet, the messenger of God, will rise again"; "lam Nabi" signifies,
"O Prophet! O God!" "Hia resulata" means, "Mahomet will rise again."
"Fasfora" signifies, "God pardon me." Our captain and we, hearing this
noise, immediately ran with our arms in our hands, thinking they were
Arabs who wanted to rob the caravan, saying to them: "What is this you
are crying out?" For they made just such a noise as is heard amongst us
Christians when a saint performs a miracle. These old men answered:
"Inte mar ahoir merti igimen albela el Nabi iamen il samia?" that is, "Do you not
see the brilliant light which comes out of the sepulchre of the Prophet?"
Our captain said: "I do not see anything;", and he asked all of us if we
had seen anything, and we answered: "No." One of the old men replied:
"Are you slaves?" that is, Mamelukes. The captain said: "Yes, they were
slaves." The old man answered: "Oh, sirs! you cannot see these celestial
things because you are not well confirmed in our faith." Our captain
replied: "Lami ianon onocii tetile etphi serophi: uatha ennawiastich melch
menelch," which means, "Oh, fools, I was willing to give you three thousand
ducats, by God, but I won't give you them now, you dogs, sons of dogs.
You must know that these lights were certain artificial fires which they
had cunningly lighted on the top of the said tower to make us believe that
they were lights which issued from the sepulchre of Mahomet; wherefore
our captain ordered that none of us should on any account enter the said
mosque. And you must know (I tell it you for a truth) there is no coblin
of iron or steel, nor loadstone, nor any mountain within four miles. We
remained there three days in order to give rest to the camels. The people
of the said city supply themselves with the provisions which come from
Arabia Felix, and from Cairo, and from Ethiopia [African coast] by sea,
for from thence to the sea is four days' journey.

Now we being tired of these things and vanities of Mahomet, prepared
ourselves to pass onwards, and with our pilots, great observers of their
compasses and charts, necessary when traversing the sea, began the journey
southwards, and we found a very fine well in which there was a great
quantity of water, which well, the Moors say, was made by St. Mark the Evangelist, by a miracle of God, on account of the want of water which prevails in that country. This well was dry at our departure. (I must not forget to mention our meeting with the sea of sand, which we left before we found the mountains of the Jews, and through which we travelled five days and five nights. Now you must understand all about this. This is a very large level plain, which is full of white sand as fine as meal, where, if unfortunately the wind should blow from the south as you come from the north, all would be dead men, and although we had the wind with us we could not see each other at a distance of ten paces. The men rode on camels in certain wooden boxes, in which they sleep and eat, and the pilots go in advance with their compasses as they do at sea. And here many died from thirst, and a great many died because when they dug and found water they drank so much that they burst; and here mummies are made. When the wind blows from the north this sand collects against a very large mountain [Mt. Athabat], which is a spur of Mount Sinai. When we were at the top of the said mountain we found a door [or doorway] of the said mountain made by the hand of man. On the left side upon the top of the said mountain there is a grotto to which there is a door of iron. Some say that Mahomet stopped there to pray. At this door a very great noise is heard. We passed this said mountain with great danger, so much so that we thought we should never arrive at this place.) Then we departed from the said well and travelled for ten days, and twice we fought with 50,000 Arabs, till at length we arrived at Mecca, and there we were a very great war, one brother with another, for there are four brothers, and they fought to be Lords of Mecca.

We will now speak of the very noble city of Mecca, what it is, its state, and who governs it. The city is most beautiful, and is very well inhabited, and contains about 6,000 families. The houses are extremely good, like our own, and there are houses worth three or four thousand ducats each. This city is not surrounded by walls. A quarter of a mile distant from the city we found a mountain where there was a road cut by human labour. And then we descended into the plain. The walls of the said city are the mountains, and it has four entrances. The governor of this city is a Sultan, that is, one of the four brothers, and is of the race of Mahomet [i.e. a Sheriff], and is subject to the Grand Sultan of Cairo. His three brothers are always at war with him. On the 18th of May we entered into the said city of Mecca; we entered from the north, and afterwards we descended into the plain. On the side towards the south there are two mountains which almost touch each other, where is the past to go to the gate of Mecca. On the other side, where the sun rises, there is another mountain pass, like a valley, through which is the road to the mountain where they celebrate the sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac, which mountain is distant from the said city about eight or ten miles. The height of this mountain is two or three casts of a stone by hand, and it is of some kind of stone, not marble, but of another colour. On the top of this said mountain there is a mosque according to their custom, which has three doors. At the foot of the said mountain there are two very beautiful reservoirs of water. One is for the caravan from Cairo, and the other for the caravan from Damascus; which water is collected there from the rain and comes from a great distance. Now, let us return to the city. At the proper time we will speak of the sacrifice which they make at the foot of the said mountain. When we entered into the said city we found the caravan from Cairo, which had arrived eight days before us, because they had not travelled by the same route as ourselves. In the said caravan there were sixty-four thousand camels and one hundred Mamelukes. You must know that, in my opinion, the curse of God has been laid upon the said city, for the country produces neither grass nor trees, nor any one thing. And they suffer from so great a dearth of water, that if every one were to drink as much as he might wish, four quattrini worth of water daily would not suffice them. I will tell you in what manner they live. A great part of their provisions comes from Cairo, that is, from the Red Sea. There is a port called Zida [Jeddah], which is distant from the said city forty miles. A great quantity of food also comes there from Arabia Felix, and also a great part comes from Ethiopia. We found a great number of pilgrims, of whom some came from Ethiopia, some from India Major, some from India Minor, some from Persia, and some from Syria. Truly I never saw so many people collected in one spot as during the twenty days I remained there. Of these people some had come for the purposes of trade, and some on pilgrimage for their pardon, in which pardon you shall understand what they do.

First we will speak of the merchandize, which comes from many parts. From India Major there come a great many jewels and all sorts of spices, and part comes from Ethiopia [African coast]; and there also comes from India Major, from a city called Banghella [Bengal], a very large quantity of stuffs of cotton and of silk, so that in this city there is carried on a very extensive traffic of merchandize, that is, of jewels, spices of every kind in abundance, cotton in large quantities, wax and odoriferous substances in the greatest abundance.

Now let us turn to the pardoning of the said pilgrims. In the midst of the said city there is a very beautiful temple, similar to the Colosseum of