

DEDICATION AND PREFACE.

TO

SIR RODERICK IMPEY MURCHISON, BART., K.C.B.,

ETC. ETC. ETC.

PRESIDENT OF THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY.

DEAR SIR RODERICK,

I am happy to be allowed to inscribe to you, from whom I have experienced no little kindness, this book, which endeavours to throw some light on the medieval geography of Asia. The subject, at least, needs no apology to one who is the honoured President of the Geographical as well as of the Hakluyt Society; for he has the best right of any man to say, "*nihil geographicum a me alienum puto.*"

The work was originally designed to embrace only the story of Friar Odoric, and perhaps of one more traveller; but seeing how much light the various fragments of minor medieval writers concerning China threw upon one another and upon Marco Polo, and how little known several of them were to English readers, it seemed desirable to gather all into one collection, edited as thoroughly as my capacities admitted. I never ventured to think of introducing Marco himself into the group. There is room enough, probably,