

for a new English edition of that prince of medieval travellers; but he claims an orbit for himself, and has no place among these asteroids. What is aimed at in these volumes is a work that shall bear some such relation to Polo as the collections of the lesser Greek geographers bear to Ptolemy.

When this task was entered on, I was more within reach of necessary aids than circumstances known to you have of late permitted, or it would scarcely have been attempted. All the reading accessible to me has, indeed, been directed to the illustration of my authors; but Palermo is not London or Paris; and the absence of some capital authority has often stopped me short in the investigation of a difficulty, just as a traveller, in projecting a complex journey, is stopped short by a black bar in the columns of his railway-guide.

I am painfully sensible also, that, in regard to many subjects dealt with in the following pages, nothing can make up for the want of genuine oriental learning. A fair familiarity with Hindustani for many years, and some reminiscences of elementary Persian, have been useful in their degree; but it is probable that they may sometimes also have led me astray, as such slender lights are apt to do.

Of the authors dealt with, Odoric, Ibn Batuta, and Goës, are already more or less accessible to English readers; the first from old Hakluyt's version, the second from Lee's translation of an Arabic abridgment, and the third from the narrative in Astley's collection.

Since the last work was published, however, a hun-