

forgotten knowledge. Nearly fifty years ago a Quarterly Reviewer received with disparaging anticipations the announcement of a new Italian edition of Polo,<sup>1</sup> as if deeming that little could be added in illustration of the Traveller to what Marsden had effected. Much as Marsden really did in his splendid edition, it would be no exaggeration to say that the light thrown on Marco's narrative has since that day been more than doubled from the stores of Chinese, Mongol, and Persian history which have been rendered accessible to European readers, or brought directly to bear on the elucidation of the Traveller, by Klaproth, Remusat, Quatremère, and many other scholars, chiefly Frenchmen. And within the last year Paris has sent out an edition of the Traveller, by M. Pauthier, which leaves far behind everything previously attempted, concentrating in the notes not only many of the best suggestions of previous commentators, but a vast mass of entirely new matter from the editor's own Chinese studies.

102. During a period including the last thirty years of the thirteenth century and the first few years of the fourteenth many diplomatic communications took place between the Mongol Khans of Persia and the sovereigns of Christendom; and in these we find a tone on the part of the Tartar princes very different from the curt insolence of the previous age. They no longer held the same domineering supremacy, and their great object now was to obtain Christian alliances against their bitter rivals, the Sultans of Egypt. These communications do not, however, bear upon our subject, except in one curious incidental aspect. The Khans of Persia, as liegemen of the Great Khan, still received from him their seals of state, and two of their letters preserved in the French archives exhibit the impressions of these seals bearing inscriptions in ancient Chinese characters, in the case of the earlier letter perhaps the first specimens of such characters that reached Europe.<sup>2</sup>

This peculiar relation, which the Mongol conquests produced

<sup>1</sup> Baldello Boni's: see that work i, p. civ. Perhaps, however, the terms quoted may refer only to the improbability of fresh light from Italian archives.

<sup>2</sup> See Remusat's Memoir in *Mem. de l'Acad. Inscript.*, vii, 367, 391, etc. The earlier letter is from Argun Khan, and came in 1289. It is written in Uigur characters in the Mongol language on a roll of cotton paper