

3. "Howbeit, during the last hundred years, persons acquainted with Persia have begun to recognise the existence of Cathay. The voyages of the Portuguese also towards the North-East, beyond the Golden Chersonese, have brought to knowledge many cities and provinces of India, and many islands likewise, with those very names which our Author applies to them; and again, on reaching the Land of China, they have ascertained from the people of that region (as we are told by Sign. John de Barros, a Portuguese gentleman, in his Geography) that Canton, one of the chief cities of that kingdom, is in $30\frac{2}{3}^{\circ}$ of latitude, with the coast running N.E. and S.W.; that after a distance of 275 leagues the said coast turns towards the N.W.; and that there are three provinces along the sea-board, Mangi, Zanton, and Quinzai, the last of which is the principal city and the King's Residence, standing in 46° of latitude. And proceeding yet further the coast attains to 50° .* Seeing then how many particulars are in our day becoming known of that part of the world concerning which Messer Marco has written, I have deemed it reasonable to publish his book, with the aid of several copies written (as I judge) more than 200 years ago, in a perfectly accurate form, and one vastly more faithful than that in which it has been heretofore read. And thus the world shall not lose the fruit that may be gathered from so much diligence and industry expended upon so honourable a branch of knowledge."

Ramusio
vindicates
Polo's Geo-
graphy.

4. Ramusio, then, after a brief apologetic parallel of the marvels related by Polo with those related by the Ancients and by the modern discoverers in the West, such as Columbus and Cortes, proceeds:—

"And often in my own mind, comparing the land explorations of these our Venetian gentlemen with the sea explorations of the aforesaid Signor Don Christopher, I have asked myself which of the two were really the more marvellous. And if patriotic prejudice delude me not, methinks good reason might be adduced for setting the land journey above the sea voyage. Consider only what a height of courage was needed to undertake and carry through so difficult an enterprise, over a route of such desperate length and hardship, whereon it was sometimes necessary to carry food for the supply of man and beast, not for days only but for months together. Columbus, on the other hand, going by sea, readily carried with him all necessary provision; and after a voyage of some 30 or 40 days was conveyed by the wind whither he desired to go, whilst the Venetians again took a whole year's time to pass all those great deserts and mighty rivers. Indeed that the difficulty of travelling to Cathay was so much greater than that of reaching the New World, and the route so much longer and more perilous, may be gathered from the fact that, since those gentlemen twice made this

Ramusio
compares
Polo with
Columbus.

* The Geography of De Barros, from which this is quoted, has never been printed. I can find nothing corresponding to this passage in the Decades.