

amounting to ten or fifteen *millions* of gold; and in like manner, when recounting other instances of great wealth in those parts, would always make use of the term *millions*, so they gave him the nickname of MESSER MARCO MILLIONI: a thing which I have noted also in the Public Books of this Republic where mention is made of him.* The Court of his House, too, at S. Giovanni Chrisostomo, has always from that time been popularly known as the Court of the Million.

6. "Not many months after the arrival of the travellers at Venice, news came that LAMPA DORIA, Captain of the Genoese Fleet, had advanced with 70 galleys to the Island of Curzola, upon which orders were issued by the Prince of the Most Illustrious Signory for the arming of 90 galleys with all the expedition possible, and Messer Marco Polo for his valour was put in charge of one of these. So he with the others, under the command of the Most Illustrious MESSER ANDREA DANDOLO, Procurator of St. Mark's, as Captain General, a very brave and worthy gentleman, set out in search of the Genoese Fleet. They fought on the September feast of Our Lady, and, as is the common hazard of war, our fleet was beaten, and Polo was made prisoner. For, having pressed on in the vanguard of the attack, and fighting with high and worthy courage in defence of his country and his kindred, he did not receive due support, and being wounded, he was taken, along with Dandolo, and immediately put in irons and sent to Genoa.

"When his rare qualities and marvellous travels became known there, the whole city gathered to see him and to speak with him, and he was no longer entreated as a prisoner but as a dear friend and honoured gentleman. Indeed they showed him such honour and affection that at all hours of the day he was visited by the noblest gentlemen of the city, and was continually receiving presents of every useful kind. Messer Marco finding himself in this position, and witnessing the general eagerness to hear all about Cathay and the Great Can, which indeed compelled him daily to repeat his story till he was weary, was advised to put the matter in writing. So having found means to get a letter written to his father here at Venice, in which he desired the latter to send the notes and memoranda which he had brought home with him, after the receipt of these, and assisted by a Genoese gentleman, who was a great friend of his, and who took great delight in learning about the various regions of the world, and used on that account to spend many hours daily in the prison with him, he wrote this present book (to please him) in the Latin tongue.

"To this day the Genoese for the most part write what they have to write in that language, for there is no possibility of expressing their natural dialect with the pen.† Thus then it came to pass that the Book was put forth at first by Messer Marco in Latin; but as many copies were taken, and as it was rendered into our vulgar tongue, all Italy became filled with it, so much was this story desired and run after.

* This curious statement is confirmed by a passage in the records of the Great Council, which, on a late visit to Venice, I was enabled to extract, through an obliging communication from Professor Minotto. (See below, p. 67.)

† This rather preposterous skit at the Genoese dialect naturally excites a remonstrance from the Abate Spotorno. (*Storia Letteraria della Liguria*, II. 217.)