

7. "The captivity of Messer Marco greatly disturbed the minds of Messer Maffio and his father Messer Nicolo. They had decided, whilst still on their travels, that Marco should marry as soon as they should get to Venice; but now they found themselves in this unlucky pass, with so much wealth and nobody to inherit it. Fearing that Marco's imprisonment might endure for many years, or, worse still, that he might not live to quit it (for many assured them that numbers of Venetian prisoners had been kept in Genoa a score of years before obtaining liberty); seeing too no prospect of being able to ransom him,—a thing which they had attempted often and by various channels,—they took counsel together, and came to the conclusion that Messer Nicolo, who, old as he was, was still hale and vigorous, should take to himself a new wife. This he did; and at the end of four years he found himself the father of three sons, Stefano, Maffio, and Giovanni. Not many years after, Messer Marco aforesaid, through the great favour that he had acquired in the eyes of the first gentlemen of Genoa, and indeed of the whole city, was discharged from prison and set free. Returning home he found that his father had in the meantime had those three other sons. Instead of taking this amiss, wise and discreet man that he was, he agreed also to take a wife of his own. He did so accordingly, but he never had any son, only two girls, one called Moreta and the other Fantina.

Ramusio's
account of
Marco's
liberation
and mar-
riage.

"When at a later date his father died, like a good and dutiful son he caused to be erected for him a tomb of very honourable kind for those days, being a great sarcophagus cut from the solid stone, which to this day may be seen under the portico before the Church of S. Lorenzo in this city, on the right hand as you enter, with an inscription denoting it to be the tomb of Messer Nicolo Polo of the contrada of S. Gio. Chrisostomo. The arms of his family consist of a *Bend* with three birds on it, and the colours, according to certain books of old histories in which you see all the coats of the gentlemen of this city emblazoned, are the field *azure*, the bend *argent*, and the three birds *sable*. These last are birds of that kind vulgarly termed *Pole*,* or, as the Latins call them, *Gracculi*.

8. "As regards the after duration of this noble and worthy family, I

* *Jackdaws*, I believe, in spite of some doubt from the imbecility of ordinary dictionaries in such matters.

They are under this name made the object of a similitude by Dante (surely a most unhappy one) in reference to the resplendent spirits flitting on the celestial stairs in the sphere of Saturn:—

"E come per lo natural costume
Le *Pole* insieme, al cominciar del giorno,
Si muovono a scaldar le fredde piume:
Poi altre vanno via senza ritorno,
Altre rivolgon sè, onde son mosse,
Ed altre roteando fan soggiorno."—*Parad.* XXI. 34.

There is some difference among authorities as to the details of the Polo blazon. According to a MS. concerning the genealogies of Venetian families written by Marco Barbaro in 1566, and of which there is a copy in the Museo Civico, the field is *gules*, the bend *or*. And this I have followed in the cut. But a note by S. Stefani



Arms of the Polo.¹

¹ [This coat of arms is reproduced from the Genealogies of Priuli, Archivio di Stato, Venice.—H. C.]