

36. Howsoever they may have been treated, here was Marco Polo one of those many thousand prisoners in Genoa ; and here, before long, he appears to have made acquaintance with a man of literary propensities, whose destiny had brought him into the like plight, by name RUSTICIANO or RUSTICHELLO of Pisa. It was this person perhaps who persuaded the Traveller to defer no longer the reduction to writing of his notable experiences ; but in any case it was he who wrote down those experiences at Marco's dictation ; it is he therefore to whom we owe the preservation of this record, and possibly even that of the Traveller's very memory. This makes the Genoese imprisonment so important an episode in Polo's biography.

To Rusticiano we shall presently recur. But let us first bring to a conclusion what may be gathered as to the duration of Polo's imprisonment.

It does not appear whether Pope Boniface made any new effort for accommodation between the Republics ; but other Italian princes did interpose, and Matteo Visconti, Captain-General of Milan, styling himself Vicar-General of the Holy Roman Empire in Lombardy, was accepted as Mediator, along with the community of Milan. Ambassadors from both States presented themselves at that city, and on the 25th May, 1299, they signed the terms of a Peace.

These terms were perfectly honourable to Venice, being absolutely equal and reciprocal ; from which one is apt to conclude that the damage to the City of the Sea was rather to her pride than to her power ; the success of Genoa, in fact, having been followed up by no systematic attack upon Venetian commerce.\* Among the terms was the mutual release of prisoners on a day to be fixed by Visconti after the completion of all formalities. This day is not recorded, but as the Treaty was ratified by the Doge of Venice on the 1st July, and the latest extant document connected with the formalities appears to be dated 18th July, we may believe that before the end of August

\* The Treaty and some subsidiary documents are printed in the Genoese *Liber Jurium*, forming a part of the *Monumenta Historiae Patriae*, published at Turin. (See *Lib. Jur.* II. 344, *seqq.*) Muratori in his Annals has followed John Villani (Bk. VIII. ch. 27) in representing the terms as highly unfavourable to Venice. But for this there is no foundation in the documents. And the terms are stated with substantial accuracy in Navagiero. (*Murat. Script.* xxiii. 1011.)