

Marco Polo was restored to the family mansion in S. Giovanni Grisostomo.

37. Something further requires to be said before quitting this event in our Traveller's life. For we confess that a critical reader may have some justification in asking what evidence there is that Marco Polo ever fought at Curzola, and ever was carried a prisoner to Genoa from that unfortunate action?

Grounds on which the story of Marco Polo's capture at Curzola rests.

A learned Frenchman, whom we shall have to quote freely in the immediately ensuing pages, does not venture to be more precise in reference to the meeting of Polo and Rusticiano than to say of the latter: "In 1298, being in durance in the Prison of Genoa, he there became acquainted with Marco Polo, whom the Genoese had deprived of his liberty *from motives equally unknown.*"*

To those who have no relish for biographies that round the meagre skeleton of authentic facts with a plump padding of what *might have been*, this sentence of Paulin Paris is quite refreshing in its stern limitation to positive knowledge. And certainly no contemporary authority has yet been found for the capture of our Traveller at Curzola. Still I think that the fact is beyond reasonable doubt.

Ramusio's biographical notices certainly contain many errors of detail; and some, such as the many years' interval which he sets between the Battle of Curzola and Marco's return, are errors which a very little trouble would have enabled him to eschew. But still it does seem reasonable to believe that the main fact of Marco's command of a galley at Curzola, and capture there, was derived from a genuine tradition, if not from documents.

Let us then turn to the words which close Rusticiano's preamble (see *post*, p. 2):—"Lequel (Messire Marc) puis demorant en le charthre de Jene, fist retraire toutes cestes chouses à Messire Rustacians de Pise que en celle meissme charthre estoit, au tens qu'il avoit 1298 anz que Jezu eut vesqui." These words are at least thoroughly consistent with Marco's capture at Curzola, as regards both the position in which they present him, and the year in which he is thus presented.

There is however another piece of evidence, though it is curiously indirect.

* *Paulin Paris, Les Manuscrits François de la Bibliothèque du Roi*, ii. 355.