

The date MCCLXXXVI assigned to it in the preceding extract has given rise to some unprofitable discussion. Could that date be accepted, no doubt it would enable us also to accept this, the sole statement from the Traveller's own age of the circumstances which brought him into a Genoese prison; it would enable us to place that imprisonment within a few months of his return from the East, and to extend its duration to three years, points which would thus accord better with the general tenor of Ramusio's tradition than the capture of Curzola. But the matter is not open to such a solution. The date of the Battle of Ayas is not more doubtful than that of the Battle of the Nile. It is clearly stated by several independent chroniclers, and is carefully established in the Ballad that we have quoted above.\* We shall see repeatedly in the course of this Book how uncertain are the transcriptions of dates in Roman numerals, and in the present case the LXXXVI is as certainly a mistake for LXXXIV as is Boniface VI. in the same quotation a mistake for Boniface VIII.

But though we cannot accept the statement that Polo was taken prisoner at *Ayas, in the spring of 1294*, we may accept the passage as evidence from a contemporary source that he was *taken prisoner in some sea-fight with the Genoese*, and thus admit it in corroboration of the Ramusian Tradition of his capture in a sea-fight at Curzola in 1298, which is perfectly consistent with all other facts in our possession.

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VII. RUSTICIANO OR RUSTICHELLO OF PISA, MARCO POLO'S FELLOW-PRISONER AT GENOA, THE SCRIBE WHO WROTE DOWN THE TRAVELS.

38. We have now to say something of that Rusticiano to whom all who value Polo's book are so much indebted.

The relations between Genoa and Pisa had long been so

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*"E per meo esse aregordenti  
De si grande scacho mato  
Correa mille duxenti  
Zonto ge novanta e quatro."*

The Armenian Prince Hayton or Héthum has put it under 1293. (See *Langlois, Mém. sur les Relations de Gênes avec la Petite-Arménie.*)