

The oldest MS. (it is supposed) in any Italian dialect is one in the Magliabecchian Library at Florence, which is known in Italy as *L'Ottima*, on account of the purity of its Tuscan, and as *Della Crusca* from its being one of the authorities cited by that body in their Vocabulary.\* It bears on its face the following note in Italian:—

“This Book called the Navigation of Messer Marco Polo, a noble Citizen of Venice, was written in Florence by Michael Ormanni my great grandfather by the Mother's side, who died in the Year of Grace One Thousand Three Hundred and Nine; and my mother brought it into our Family of Del Riccio, and it belongs to me Pier del Riccio and to my Brother; 1452.”

As far as I can learn, the age which this note implies is considered to be supported by the character of the MS. itself.† If it be accepted, the latter is a performance going back to within eleven years *at most* of the first dictation of the Travels. At first sight, therefore, this would rather argue that the original had been written in pure Tuscan. But when Baldelli came to prepare it for the press he found manifest indications of its being a Translation from the *French*. Some of these he has noted; others have followed up the same line of comparison. We give some detailed examples in a note.‡

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\* The MS. has been printed by Baldelli as above, and again by Bartoli in 1863.

† This is somewhat peculiar. I traced a few lines of it, which with Del Riccio's note were given in facsimile in the First Edition.

‡ The Crusca is cited from Bartoli's edition.

French idioms are frequent, as *l'uomo* for the French *on*; *quattro-vinti* instead of *ottanta*; etc.

We have at p. 35, “*Questo piano è molto cavo*,” which is nonsense, but is explained by reference to the French (G. T.) “*Voz di qu' il est celle plainne mout chae*” (*chaude*).

The bread in Kerman is bitter, says the G. T. “*por ce que l'eive hi est amer*,” because the water there is bitter. The Crusca mistakes the last word and renders (p. 40) “*e questi è per lo mare che vi viene*.”

“*Sachiés de voir qe endementiers*,” know for a truth that whilst—, by some misunderstanding of the last word becomes (p. 129) “*Sappiate di vero senza mentire*.”

“*Mès de sel font-il monoie*”—“They make money of salt,” becomes (p. 168) “*ma fannole da loro*,” *sel* being taken for a pronoun, whilst in another place *sel* is transferred bodily without translation.

“*Chevoil*,” “hair” of the old French, appears in the Tuscan (p. 20) as *cavagli*, “horses.”—“*La Grant Provence Jereraus*,” the great general province, appears (p. 68) as a province whose proper name is *Ienaraus*. In describing Kúblái's expedition against Mien or Burma, Polo has a story of his calling on the Jugglers at his court to undertake the job, promising them a Captain and other help, “*Cheveitain*