

52. The French Text that we have been quoting, published by the Geographical Society of Paris in 1824, affords on the other hand the strongest corresponding proof that it is an original and not a Translation. Rude as is the language of the manuscript (Fr. 1116, formerly No. 7367, of Paris Library), it is, in the correctness of the proper names, and the intelligible exhibition of the itineraries, much superior to any form of the Work previously published.

Old French
Text pub-
lished by
the Société
de Géo-
graphie.

The language is very peculiar. We are obliged to call it French, but it is not "Frenche of Paris." "Its style," says Paulin Paris, "is about as like that of good French authors of the age, as in our day the natural accent of a German, an Englishman, or an Italian, is like that of a citizen of Paris or Blois." The author is at war with all the practices of French grammar; subject and object, numbers, moods, and tenses, are in consummate confusion. Even readers of his own day must at times have been fain to guess his meaning. Italian words are constantly introduced, either quite in the crude or rudely Gallicized.* And words

et aide." This has fairly puzzled the Tuscan, who converts these (p. 186) into two Tartar tribes, "*quegli d' Aide e quegli di Caveità.*"

So also we have *lievre* for hare transferred without change; *lait*, milk, appearing as *laido* instead of *latte*; *très*, rendered as "three"; *bue*, "mud," Italianised as *buoi*, "oxen," and so forth. Finally, in various places when Polo is explaining Oriental terms we find in the Tuscan MS. "*cioè a dire in Francesco.*"

The blunders mentioned are intelligible enough as in a version *from the French*; but in the description of the Indian pearl-fishery we have a startling one not so easy to account for. The French says, "the divers gather the sea-oysters (*hostrige de Mer*), and in these the pearls are found." This appears in the Tuscan in the extraordinary form that the divers catch those fishes called *Herrings* (*Aringhe*), and in those *Herrings* are found the Pearls!

* As examples of these Italianisms: "*Et ont del olio de la lanpe dou sepolchro de Crist*"; "*L'Angel ven en vision pour mesajes de Deu à un Veschevo qe mout estoient home de sante vite*"; "*E certes il estoit bien beizongno*"; "*ne trop caut ne trop fredo*"; "*la crense*" (*credenza*); "*remort*" for noise (*rumore*); "*inverno*"; "*jorno*"; "*dementiqué*" (*dimenticato*); "*enferme*" for sickly; "*leign*" (*legno*); "*devisce*" (*dovizia*); "*ammalaide*" (*ammalato*), etc. etc.

Professor Bianconi points out that there are also traces of *Venetian* dialect, as *Pare* for *père*; *Mojer* for wife; *Zabater*, cobbler; *cazaor*, huntsman, etc.

I have not been able to learn to what extent books in this kind of mixed language are extant. I have observed one, a romance in verse called *Macaire* (*Altfranzösische Gedichte aus Venez. Handschriften*, von Adolf Mussafia, Wien, 1864), the language of which is not unlike this jargon of Rustician's, e.g. :—

" 'Dama,' fait-il, ' molto me poso merviler
De ves enfant quant le fi batecer
De un signo qe le vi sor la spal'a droiturer
Qe non ait nul se no filz d'inperer.' "—(p. 41)