

St. Lewis charged him to the Tartar Courts, the narrative of one great journey, which, in its rich detail, its vivid pictures, its acuteness of observation and strong good sense, seems to me to form a Book of Travels of much higher claims than *any one series* of Polo's chapters; a book, indeed, which has never had justice done to it, for it has few superiors in the whole Library of Travel.

Enthusiastic Biographers, beginning with Ramusio, have placed Polo on the same platform with Columbus. But where has our Venetian Traveller left behind him any trace of the genius and lofty enthusiasm, the ardent and justified previsions which mark the great Admiral as one of the lights of the human race? * It is a juster praise that the spur which his Book eventually gave to geographical studies, and the beacons which it hung out at the Eastern extremities of the Earth helped to guide the aims, though scarcely to kindle the fire, of the greater son of the rival Republic. His work was at

I am indebted to the kind courtesy of that eminent geographer himself for the indication of this reference and the main facts, as I had lost a note of my own on the subject.

It seems a somewhat complex question whether a native even of *French* Flanders at that time should be necessarily claimable as a Frenchman; * but no doubt on this point is alluded to by M. d'Avezac, so he probably had good ground for that assumption. [See also *Yule's* article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and *Rockhill's Rubruck*, Int., p. xxxv.—H. C.]

That cross-grained Orientalist, I. J. Schmidt, on several occasions speaks contemptuously of this veracious and delightful traveller, whose evidence goes in the teeth of some of his crotchets. But I am glad to find that Professor Peschel takes a view similar to that expressed in the text: "The narrative of Ruysbroek [Rubruquis], almost immaculate in its freedom from fabulous insertions, may be indicated on account of its truth to nature as the greatest geographical masterpiece of the Middle Ages." (*Gesch. der Erdkunde*, 1865, p. 151.)

* High as Marco's name deserves to be set, his place is not beside the writer of such burning words as these addressed to Ferdinand and Isabella: "From the most tender age I went to sea, and to this day I have continued to do so. Whosoever devotes himself to this craft must desire to know the secrets of Nature here below. For 40 years now have I thus been engaged, and wherever man has sailed hitherto on the face of the sea, thither have I sailed also. I have been in constant relation with men of learning, whether ecclesiastic or secular, Latins and Greeks, Jews and Moors, and men of many a sect besides. To accomplish this my longing (to know the Secrets of the World) I found the Lord favourable to my purposes; it is He who hath given me the needful disposition and understanding. He bestowed upon me abundantly the knowledge of seamanship: and of Astronomy He gave me enough to work withal, and so with Geometry and Arithmetic. . . . In the days of my youth I studied

* The County of Flanders was at this time in large part a fief of the French Crown. (See *Natalis de Wailly*, notes to Joinville, p. 576.) But that would not much affect the question either one way or the other.