

tains, there to await the latter days; a legend with which the disturbed mind of Europe not unnaturally connected that cataclysm of unheard-of Pagans that seemed about to deluge Christendom in the first half of the 13th century. In these stories also the beautiful Roxana, who becomes the bride of Alexander, is *Darius's* daughter, bequeathed to his arms by the dying monarch. Conspicuous among them again is the Legend of the Oracular Trees of the Sun and Moon, which with audible voice foretell the place and manner of Alexander's death. With this Alexandrian legend some of the later forms of the story had mixed up one of Christian origin about the Dry Tree, *L'Arbre Sec*. And they had also adopted the Oriental story of the Land of Darkness and the mode of escape from it, which Polo relates at p. 484 of vol. ii.

74. We have seen in the most probable interpretation of the nickname *Milioni* that Polo's popular reputation in his lifetime was of a questionable kind; and a contemporary chronicler, already quoted, has told us how on his death-bed the Traveller was begged by anxious friends to retract his extraordinary stories.* A little later one who copied the Book "*per passare tempo e malinconia*" says frankly that he puts no faith in it.† Sir Thomas Brown is content "to carry a wary eye" in reading "Paulus Venetus"; but others of our countrymen in the last century express strong doubts whether he ever was in Tartary or China.‡ Marden's edition might well have extinguished the last sparks of scepticism.§ Hammer meant praise in calling Polo "*der Vater orientalischer Hodogetik*," in spite of the uncouthness of

Injustice
long done to
Polo. Sin-
gular modern
instance.

* See passage from Jacopo d'Acqui, *supra*, p. 54.

† It is the transcriber of one of the Florence MSS. who appends this terminal note, worthy of Mrs. Nickleby:—"Here ends the Book of Messer M. P. of Venice, written with mine own hand by me Amalio Bonaguasi when Podestà of Cierreto Guidi, to get rid of time and *ennui*. The contents seem to me incredible things, not lies so much as miracles; and it may be all very true what he says, but I don't believe it; though to be sure throughout the world very different things are found in different countries. But these things, it has seemed to me in copying, are entertaining enough, but not things to believe or put any faith in; that at least is my opinion. And I finished copying this at Cierreto aforesaid, 12th November, A.D. 1392."

‡ *Vulgar Errors*, Bk. I. ch. viii.; *Astley's Voyages*, IV. 583.

§ A few years before Marsden's publication, the Historical branch of the R. S. of Science at Göttingen appears to have put forth as the subject of a prize Essay the Geography of the Travels of Carpini, Rubruquis, and especially of Marco Polo. (See *L. of M. Polo*, by Zurla, in *Collezione di Vite e Ritratti d'Illustri Italiani*. Pad. 1816.)