

the eulogy. But another grave German writer, ten years after Marsden's publication, put forth in a serious book that the whole story was a clumsy imposture!*

XII. CONTEMPORARY RECOGNITION OF POLO AND HIS BOOK.

75. But we must return for a little to Polo's own times.

How far was there diffusion of his Book in his own day? Ramusio states, as we have seen, that immediately after the first commission of Polo's narrative to writing (in Latin as he imagined), many copies of it were made, it was translated into the vulgar tongue, and in a few months all Italy was full of it.

The few facts that we can collect do not justify this view of the rapid and diffused renown of the Traveller and his Book. The number of MSS. of the latter dating from the 14th century is no doubt considerable, but a large proportion of these are of Pipino's condensed Latin Translation, which was not put forth, if we can trust Ramusio, till 1320, and certainly not much earlier. The whole number of MSS. in various languages that we have been able to register, amounts to about eighty. I find it difficult to obtain statistical data as to the comparative number of copies of different works existing in manuscript. With

* See *Städtewesen des Mittelalters*, by K. D. Hüllmann, Bonn, 1829, vol. iv.

After speaking of the Missions of Pope Innocent IV. and St. Lewis, this author sketches the Travels of the Polos, and then proceeds:—"Such are the clumsily compiled contents of this ecclesiastical fiction (*Kirchengeschichtlichen Dichtung*) disguised as a Book of Travels, a thing devised generally in the spirit of the age, but specially in the interests of the Clergy and of Trade. . . . This compiler's aim was analogous to that of the inventor of the Song of Roland, to kindle enthusiasm for the conversion of the Mongols, and so to facilitate commerce through their dominions. . . . Assuredly the Poli never got further than Great Bucharía, which was then reached by many Italian Travellers. What they have related of the regions of the Mongol Empire lying further east consists merely of recollections of the bazaar and travel-talk of traders from those countries; whilst the notices of India, Persia, Arabia, and Ethiopia, are borrowed from Arabic Works. The compiler no doubt carries his audacity in fiction a long way, when he makes his hero Marcus assert that he had been seventeen years in Kúblái's service," etc. etc. (pp. 360-362).

In the French edition of *Malcolm's History of Persia* (II. 141), Marco is styled "*prêtre Venetien*"! I do not know whether this is due to Sir John or to the translator.

[Polo is also called "a Venetian Priest," in a note, vol. i., p. 409, of the original edition of London, 1815, 2 vols., 4to.—H. C.]