

was written, and who touches so many things in the seen and unseen Worlds, never alludes to Polo, nor I think to anything that can be connected with his Book. I believe that no mention of *Cathay* occurs in the *Divina Commedia*. That distant region is indeed mentioned more than once in the poems of a humbler contemporary, Francesco da Barberino, but there is nothing in his allusions besides this name to suggest any knowledge of Polo's work.*

Neither can I discover any trace of Polo or his work in that of his contemporary and countryman, Marino Sanudo the Elder, though this worthy is well acquainted with the somewhat later work of Hayton, and many of the subjects which he touches in his own book would seem to challenge a reference to Marco's labours.

76. Of contemporary or nearly contemporary references to our Traveller by name, the following are all that I can produce, and none of them are new.

Contemporary references to Polo.

First there is the notice regarding his presentation of his book to Thibault de Cepoy, of which we need say no more (*supra*, p. 68).

Next there is the Preface to Friar Pipino's Translation, which we give at length in the Appendix (E) to these notices. The phraseology of this appears to imply that Marco was still alive, and this agrees with the date assigned to the work by Ramusio.

* See *Del Reggimento e de' Costumi delle donne di Messer Francesco da Barberino*, Roma, 1815, pp. 166 and 271. The latter passage runs thus, on *Slavery*:—

“E fu indutta prima da Noé,
E fu cagion lo vin, perchè si egge:
Ch' egli è un paese, dove
Son molti servi in parte di Cathay:
Che per questa cagione
Hanno a nimico il vino,
E non ne beon, nè voglion vedere.”

The author was born the year before Dante (1264), and though he lived to 1348 it is probable that the poems in question were written in his earlier years. *Cathay* was no doubt known by dim repute long before the final return of the Polos, both through the original journey of Nicolo and Maffeo, and by information gathered by the Missionary Friars. Indeed, in 1278 Pope Nicolas III., in consequence of information said to have come from Abaka Khan of Persia, that Kúblái was a baptised Christian, sent a party of Franciscans with a long letter to the Kaan *Quobley*, as he is termed. They never seem to have reached their destination. And in 1289 Nicolas IV. entrusted a similar mission to Friar John of Monte Corvino, which eventually led to very tangible results. Neither of the Papal letters, however, mentions *Cathay*. (See *Mosheim*, App. pp. 76 and 94.)