

Tartar, or Indian, or any man of any nation, who in his own person hath had so much knowledge and experience of the divers parts of the World and its Wonders as hath had this Messer Marco! And for that reason he bethought himself that it would be a very great pity did he not cause to be put in writing all the great marvels that he had seen, or on sure information heard of, so that other people who had not these advantages might, by his Book, get such knowledge. And I may tell you that in acquiring this knowledge he spent in those various parts of the World good six-and-twenty years. Now, being thereafter an inmate of the Prison at Genoa, he caused Messer Rusticiano of Pisa, who was in the said Prison likewise, to reduce the whole to writing; and this befell in the year 1298 from the birth of Jesus.

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## CHAPTER I.

HOW THE TWO BROTHERS POLO SET FORTH FROM CONSTANTINOPLE  
TO TRAVERSE THE WORLD.

IT came to pass in the year of Christ 1260, when Baldwin was reigning at Constantinople,<sup>1</sup> that Messer Nicolas Polo, the father of my lord Mark, and Messer Maffeo Polo, the brother of Messer Nicolas, were at the said city of CONSTANTINOPLE, whither they had gone from Venice with their merchants' wares. Now these two Brethren, men singularly noble, wise, and provident, took counsel together to cross the GREATER SEA on a venture of trade; so they laid in a store of jewels and set forth from Constantinople, crossing the Sea to SOLDAIA.<sup>2</sup>