

THE INTRODUCTION

I. THE HOUSE OF POLO

OF THE FAMILY OF MARCO POLO LITTLE IS KNOWN, AND THAT LITTLE WILL be found conveniently set out in the accompanying genealogical tree, where references to the contemporary documents are given.¹ RAMUSIO believed that Marco Polo's grandfather was called Andrea. He writes, "Having seen many instruments & very ancient papers about the division of property between their heirs of the said house in the Corte del Millioni, which have been shown me as genuine by those who after so many years are now come by reason of succession to the possession of that property, I find that Master Andrea Polo of San Felice, an honoured gentleman, had three sons, the first of whom was Master Marco, the second Mafio, the third Nicolo. These two last were those who went to Constantinople first and then to Catai, as is seen. And Master Marco being come the first to death, the wife of Master Nicolo . . . , in order to renew the memory of the dead, gave the name Marco to the son who was born, who is the author of this book."² It seems, however, that modern research has failed to find any early document which mentions Andrea of San Felice, while on the other hand the elder Marco must have been alive in 1295, if he had a share in the purchase of the family house in the ward of S. Giovanni Grisostomo; and his will made in 1280 is extant.³ Two or three times in this will his brothers

¹ Seventy-five or more documents, for the most part found and first published by the late Prof. G. ORLANDINI in "Marco Polo e la sua Famiglia", in *Archivio Veneto-Tridentino*, Vol. IX, 1926, pp. 1-68. This valuable article is referred to as *Or.*, and the numbered documents which are printed there complete or in summary are referred to as d. followed by the appropriate number. Supplementary documents, also found by Prof. ORLANDINI, are printed by his kind leave in this volume, pp. 521-595, and are referred to in the same way, and if a page number is added it refers (unless otherwise stated) to a page in this volume.

² G.-B. RAMUSIO *Nauigationi et Viaggi* Vol. II. 1559, Pref. fol. 8r^o. d. 95 p. 587. The first part of this sentence (Having . . . that property,) was omitted in the later editions. Like other documents used by RAMUSIO these instruments and papers have disappeared. CICOGNA *Inscriz. Venez.* II. p. 389: Che Andrea Polo fosse da san Felice lo attestano tutte le Genealogie. But he gives no reference, and no better authority has been found.

³ *Or.* p. 17 (2), d. 14. The date of the purchase does not seem to have been exactly found. In 1280 Marco senior and his sister-in-law were living in S. Severo (d.1). It is certain that Nicolò senior and Maffeo had shares in the S. Gio. Grisostomo property, and it may be fairly inferred that the house had been bought or built between their return from Catai about 1295 and the death of Nicolò before August 1300 (dd. 2, 6). But at the risk of disagreeing with

ORLANDINI