

Oktai Khan was succeeded by his son Gaiyuk, who was inclined to favor Christianity, and he, by his cousins Mangou and Kublai, the sons of Suli, the brother of Oktai. It was reported in the west that Mangou had embraced Christianity, doubtless on account of the favour shown to the Nestorians by his predecessor Gaiyuk. Accordingly, Louis IX. of France, who is Saint Louis of the Romish calendar, hearing at the same time of the enmity of the Mongols to the Arabians, which led to the extinction of the caliphate in a few years, sent an embassy to Mangou Khan, to induce him, as a Christian monarch, to take part in a last crusade. The agents on this occasion were William de Rubruquis or Ruysbroeck, a Franciscan, and Bartholomew of Cremona, who have furnished interesting statements in regard to the Nestorian missions. Rubruquis informs us that in fifteen towns of Cathay Nestorian Christians were found, and that their Metropolitan dwelt at Se-gan-foo, where the famous stone was afterwards discovered. The mission, which resulted in nothing but the information that Mangou was no Christian, was undertaken by them in 1253, and in 1259 Mangou Khan died. At his death the Mongol empire was divided into the east and west; the centre of the former being China, and of the latter Persia. While Holagu and Abaka Khan, who, in 1274, sent envoys to the Council of Lyons, ruled the west, the elder brother of Holagu Khan, Kublai, removed the seat of his empire to Kambalu or Khanbalig, which is Pekin, where, in 1263, he received, not Marco Polo, as is erroneously stated in our last number, but his father and uncle, Nicolas and Maffeo Polo. To them he gave a letter for the Pope, requesting him to send out a hundred persons to prove that the law of Christ was better than that of Mahomet, which held sway in the west, and of Buddha, which commanded the homage of the East. In 1274, accordingly, Pope Gregory X. sent two Dominicans to Kublai Khan, and in 1278 Nicholas III. sent some Franciscans. Young Marco Polo had already commenced his eastward journey in 1271. Nothing of much importance, however, was accomplished beyond disputes with the Nestorians, which had commenced in the time of Rubruquis, who charges the missionaries of that faith with ignorance and heresy, until the year 1289, when John de Monte Corvino, a Minorite, was sent to China by Pope Nicholas IV., who had himself belonged to the Franciscan order. As John went by way of India, and moreover visited the western Mongol empire first of all, he did not arrive at the court of the Chinese emperor till 1294, shortly after the death of Kublai Khan. Timur Khan, the grandson of Kublai, and his successor in the empire, resisted all the efforts of the Franciscan to convert him, but the missionary was more successful with George, a descendant of Prester John, and a Nestorian Christian, whom he brought into the Catholic fold. A prejudice had arisen against Christianity during the preceding reign, that of Kublai, when Nayan, a Christian chief and relation of the emperor, had raised the cross as the standard of rebellion. He was defeated and killed, and the courtiers of Kublai urged him to persecute the Christians, but the emperor magnanimously refused to abridge in any way their privileges. John de Monte Corvino built a church at Pekin, endured and overcame much Nestorian opposition, in eleven years baptized six thousand persons, and translated the New Testament and the Psalms into the Mongol language. He also established a school, and bought a hundred and fifty children, whom he taught Greek and Latin, and educated in the Catholic faith. This apostle of China was made Archbishop of Pekin by Clement V. in 1307, with seven suffragan bishops, all Franciscans, and a considerable body of priests. He died in