

CHINA AND CHINESE MISSIONS.

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Alexander the Third is well known in connection with English history as the Pope who encouraged Thomas à Becket in his opposition to King Henry II., and before whom that Monarch was required to humble himself for permitting the death of the haughty primate. He stands forth still more prominently in connection with the history of the German Empire. Frederick Barbarossa was its ruler during his papacy, and with him Alexander maintained a fierce contest, using guile and force, civil and ecclesiastical, to such purpose, that in 1177, he brought the proudest lord of Christendom to cast himself in the dust at the pontiff's feet, while he, setting his heel upon the neck of the fallen emperor, quoted the words of Psalm xci. 13, "The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot." It was to this Pope that certain men from the east came, who pretended to be ambassadors from the Tartar Khan, Prester John; but whether they were really such or not, the negotiations entered into between the pope and them resulted in nothing. In the meantime the rise of the mendicant orders of monks made a great change in the relations of the Church and heathenism. In 1208, Francis of Assisi, in Italy, renounced the world and went forth, under his father's curse, clothed in the garb of the mendicant, to endure the scorn of the great and the derision of the people while calling all men to repentance and to good works, which were often unfortunately more in accordance with Rome's teaching than that of Christ. He laboured himself in many parts of Europe, in Morocco and in Egypt, among the Mahomedans, and founded the Franciscan order. In the same year, Dominic Guzman, a Spaniard, went with some companions on a mission to the pious Albigenses in the south of France. In 1220, his followers adopted the rule of St. Francis, and became mendicants under the name of their founder, and in 1232, the Inquisition being established, the Dominicans were put in sole charge of its atrocious machinery, and rejoiced in the name *Domini canes* (dogs of the Lord), indicative of their keen scent for heresy and ability for hunting down the enemies of the Church. These two orders of Franciscans and Dominicans furnished for a long time the most zealous missionaries of the Romish Church. We have already seen that the Mongols whom Zhenghis Khan first led to victory in the east, under his successors extended their conquests and ravages into Europe, causing much alarm in the churches of the west. Pope Innocent IV. dreading their power and desirous of the honor of converting them to the true faith, sent an embassy in 1245, to the court of Oktai Khan, the son of Zenghis Khan, which consisted altogether of Franciscans and Dominicans, that were not afraid to take their lives in their hands for the furtherance of the gospel. The leader of this embassy was Giovanni di Plano Carpini, a Minorite friar, the *Minorites* being a name given to the Franciscans by their founder to mark their humility, and by which they were distinguished from the Dominicans, called occasionally *Fratres Majores*. The name of his book, which contains the first European description of the Mongol nation, is "The work pleasing to know of John (Giovanni), of the order of Minorites, and Simon, a preacher of St. Dominic, in which are contained two journeys in Tartary by certain friars (brothers). . . . sent by Pope Innocent IV., as Ambassadors into the said Province of Scythia (the ancient name of Tartary)." The monks were not successful in their mission of converting the Mongol Khan, although they gained a hearing for their Church, and paved the way for future missions.