

A LETTER FROM CHINA.

[The following letter, which we are enabled to publish through the kindness of His Excellency Mgr. Falconio, to whom it was addressed, will be read with interest by our readers. Han-kow, the city of refuge whence the letter is dated, is in the province of Hu-pe at the confluence of the Han river and the Yang-tze-kiang. Mgr. Fontosati, with the details of whose heroic death at the hands of the Boxers the letter opens, was Vicar-Apostolic of Southern Hou-nan, and was a member of the Order of St. Francis, which possesses nine Vicariates in China. Heng-chow-tou was the scene of the martyrdom of Mgr. Fontosati and his brother Franciscans. EDITORIAL NOTE].

HAN-KOW, July 21, 1900

Eccellenza Illma:—

You have already seen in the papers the account of the present distressing state of affairs in the Chinese empire, how a violent persecution has swept away the most flourishing Christian centres, sparing neither bishops, nor priests, nor nuns, nor even innocent children. Fires of incendiary origin have completely destroyed our buildings—churches, orphan-asylums, and the peaceful homes of our Christians; and an insatiable thirst for human blood has manifested itself. Ah! dear *Monsignore*, our cherished friend Mgr. Fontosati is no more. The inhuman wretches not only killed him, but heaped upon him in his last hours a thousand cruelties and indignities. His eyes were gouged out; a knife was plunged into him, which he had hardly succeeded in extracting with his own hands, when a monster of cruelty plunged it in again; of the crowd, many threw stones at him, while others beat him with sticks. For four hours did these, and even worse, tortures continue; at last the martyr yielded up his precious life. With him died Father Joseph Gomboro, a Piedmontese, who was given over to similar tortures and despatched with like cruelty. Before expiring, Mgr. Fontosati and Father Gomboro imparted one to the other a last absolution. The mutilated corpses were enveloped in cloths, then saturated with coal-oil and set on fire. The Christians succeeded, by means of money, in having the ashes buried in an adjoining lot. Peace be with you, my gentle friends! And from heaven, which is now assuredly your dwelling-place, pray for me and for all your brethren here below.