

Mission Fields.

AT the present day, when we see the minds of the majority of manhood wholly taken up with material progress—the advancement of profane science, the increase of wealth, and the growth of political power—it is a relief to turn to a question of less prominence, but of more importance to humanity—the spread and advancement of religion.

Unthinking Catholics may imagine that the days of the Apostolate are ended ; that we of the present generation have no other duty than that of preserving intact the faith confided to us by our forefathers. But this cannot be, as long as so large a part of the world is pagan, and so many Catholics, even, are not true ones.

Among the pagan nations, China is the most conspicuous. This empire has a population of four hundred million. Though conditions would seem particularly adapted for the reception of Christianity, obstacles requiring no small amount of courage on the part of the missionary, present themselves. Possessed of a religion and morality of his own and boasting of a civilization that has lasted through forty centuries, the yellow man is not particularly anxious to change good enough for better. Added to this, he looks upon the missionary in the same category with the unscrupulous European politicians and merchants who, while working for their own national or personal profit, are indifferent to the injury and insult given to Chinese power and patriotism. The massacres which recently took place in China, so destructive to Catholic missions, show how intense is the Mongol hatred for Christian converts.

India is another mission field. This country has a population of nearly three hundred millions, mostly adherents of the religion of Brahma. Here, in addition to the difficulties met with in China, are those offered by the pride of caste. On the division of the people into castes the entire social system hinges ; and as the introduction of Christianity, teaching that all men are brothers and equal, involves the destruction of modes of thought and govern-