

Association for the Propagation of the Faith.

IV.

Favourable disposition of the majority of Infidel and Heathen nations to embrace Christianity.

At the present day above all, the prospects of the Catholic Missions are favourable. It seems as if on all sides a great movement of the nations was preparing to embrace the holy religion of the Saviour. In the first place, if we turn our eyes to the East, in nearly all the regions there which are still subject to the Turkish emperors, Catholicism makes a visible progress; the hatred of the Turks against Christians declines with the Mahometan fanaticism; at the very gates of the capital, the Catholic worship is celebrated with extraordinary pomp, and with more freedom than the Church enjoys in many kingdoms of Europe: every year the adorable body of Jesus Christ is born in triumph through the streets and suburbs of Para, and even the infidels bow themselves respectfully as it passes. Constantinople beholds also a Catholic college within its walls. Smyrna, in Asia Minor, contains nearly 10,000 Catholics: Salonica possesses a school, and in many other places holy priests and fervent monks labour with admirable zeal to recall their dissentient brethren to the unity of the faith. The Right Rev. Dr. Coupperie, bishop of Babylon, possessed great influence in these countries from his knowledge and his virtues; he converted many heretics; Syrian, Armenian, Chaldean, Nestorian, and Jacobite Bishops have returned to the bosom of the Church; but through all the Levant, the number of his converts would be much greater, if there existed the

necessary pecuniary means for assisting the clergy of these different sects, who are extremely poor, and for protecting many of those who wish to be converted, against the persecution of their fellow-countrymen.

Since Palestine and Syria have come under the dominion of the pacha of Egypt, the Catholics enjoy much more liberty. There new missions, colleges, and churches are continually rising up, and in some cities, as in Aleppo, the most edifying piety is witnessed.

The inhabitants of the great island of Ceylon have solicited and obtained from the English government the re-establishment of the Catholic religion, and a bishopric. Those of the kingdoms of Camboja, of Pegu, and of Laos call for missionaries, and some have been already sent to them. Our holy religion enjoys great liberty in Persia, and the king of Siam continues to afford it the same protection which it has obtained in his kingdom for more than a century.

In the vast empire of China, if the progress of the gospel be not as remarkable as it was at a happier epoch, the fervour of the Catholics has not declined. The emperor is not favourable to religion, but he does not dare to persecute it openly, in consequence of the belief generally prevalent, that heaven punishes its persecutors. The Chinese regard the sudden death of their late emperor Kia-king, which took place in Tartary, on the 2nd September, 1820, as a punishment from heaven for the martyrdom of the holy bishop of Tabarca; and that of Chang-ming, viceroy of the province of Sut-chuen, as having been deserved by the persecution which he excited against the Christians. In this single province, the missionaries have baptized, since 1800, about 30,000