

of his being sent in 1272, already a Franciscan, by the Emperor Michael Palæologus to Pope Gregory X, with a communication on the subject of that union of the Greek Church with Rome, which the Emperor, in his own supposed interest, professed to promote, though his efforts ended only in his being excommunicated by one of Gregory's successors, and denied Christian burial by his own.

John was sent back to the east with several companions, probably soon afterwards, and appears to have remained abroad till 1289, when he returned to the Papal Court bringing intelligence of the wide reception of the Faith in Western Asia, and of the desire of the princes and people for the preaching of the Word, the favourable dispositions of Argun, the reigning Khan of the House of Hulagu,¹ being especially eulogised. The Pope thought it well to send back to the field of labour with additional aid a missionary so experienced as John now was, giving him letters of commendation to Argun, to the King and Queen of (Lesser) Armenia, to the Patriarch of the Jacobites and Bishop of Tauris, and also to the great Kublai himself, and to Kublai's rival, Kaidu of Turkestan.

John remained at Tabriz till 1291, and then proceeded to the far east in order to fulfil his mission to Kublai, travelling by the way of India as he tells us in the first of the following letters. It is not likely that he reached Cambalec in the lifetime of the old Khan, who died in the beginning of 1294, for voyages were slow, and he stayed long at St. Thomas's and other places on the coast of Maabar or Coromandel.²

It will be well here to say something of the third letter in the

¹ Reigned 1284-1291.

² A party of friars had already been dispatched in April 1278 by Pope Nicholas III on a mission to Cathay and with a very long letter from the Pope to Kublai Khan, who was then alleged to have been baptised. He is addressed "*Quolibey, Magnus Cham, Imperator et Moderator Omnium Tartarorum Illustris.*" The members of the mission were Gerard of Prato, Antony of Parma, John of St. Agatha, Andrew of Florence, and Matthew of Arezzo, all Minorites. There seems to be no further knowledge of them. The words of John of Montecorvino in the first of his letters seem to make it pretty certain that they did not reach Cambalec. (See *Mosheim*, p. 68, and *Append.*, Nos. xxii, xxiii.)