

THE author of the Treaty of Berlin, in rejecting the claims of Greece to extension, proclaimed that it was the settled policy of England to strengthen Turkey. It was his policy, and that of his Party, but it cannot be said to have ever been the policy of the English people. It is true that the English people allowed themselves to be drawn into the war with Russia in defence of Turkey, but the actuating motive of the masses was not love of Turkey; it was hatred of Russian despotism and fear of Russian ambition. Popular sympathy had gone with Byron to the emancipation of Greece from Turkish rule. The Treaty of Berlin, founded on the policy of strengthening Turkey and keeping the Christian people of Eastern Europe under her barbarous and embruting sway, is now falling to the ground like a house of cards. Events have once more conclusively shown the absurdity of expecting regeneration where there was no germ of moral life. All the galvanism of diplomacy has not been able to impart a spark of genuine vitality to the corpse of a great Empire of rapine. All the loans which Palmerston's endorsement, in an evil hour, procured for the Turk have run to waste in the filthy luxury of the Sultan and the Pachas. Of the promised reforms not one has been made. The passes of the Balkans have not been fortified, though, to give Turkey the privilege of fortifying them, the author of the Treaty of Berlin was prepared to go to war. Nature is asserting her beneficent supremacy over diplomatic selfishness, and clearing away the dead matter to make way for new life. Whatever turn may be taken by the imbroglío of intrigue, to which the revolt of Roumelia has given birth, the practical upshot will undoubtedly be another step in the ascent of the Christian races to independent nationality, and in the descent of Turkey to the grave. If the aggrandizement of Russia in the Eastern Mediterranean requires repression it can be curbed only by living and independent powers, such as a United Bulgaria and a Renovated Greece. Over Turkish councils she reigns by fear, and it is not surprising to learn that the solicitations of Lord Salisbury's envoy have been rejected by the Porte. So long as the Christian nationalities are held by a diplomacy, equally foolish and iniquitous, under Turkish sway, they will continue to stretch out their hands to Russia as their protectress; but once made independent and strong they will become barriers against her further aggrandizement. Even the petty kingdom of Greece from the moment of its liberation began to shake off subserviency to Russia. We need not regard as incredible the report that the statesmen of St. Petersburg view the consolidation of a Christian power, by the connection of Roumelia to Bulgaria, with very doubtful feeling. The restoration of the Greek Empire would be a broad and complete solution of the Eastern Question. Nor would there be any practical danger in satisfying Russian aspirations by seating a Russian Prince on the restored throne of Constantinople. Between the kindred dynasties of Constantinople and St. Petersburg no amity dangerous to the rest of the world would be likely to prevail. In royal families consanguinity is the strongest security against concord.

THE Freethinkers, in their recent conventions, have been going much too fast. They have a right to liberty of opinion, but they have not a right to unchristianize society: nor is it in their power or in the power of any one to do this, as, if they are philosophers and genuine evolutionists, they ought to know. Political franchises they already enjoy, at least throughout this continent, on a footing of perfect equality with Christians. Nor is there any restraint on the publication of their opinions other than the obligation which rests on every one, and which no right-minded man would wish to disregard, of respecting the feelings of their fellow-citizens. The only point with regard to which they have any substantial ground for complaint is that relating to the acceptance of atheist testimony in a court of justice; and it is evident that this grievance will soon be numbered with the past, though there is difficulty in parting with what, in the case of witnesses who believe in Deity and in future retribution, is a real guarantee for veracity and a real security for justice. Freethinkers, so long as they do not outrage the sentiments of others, may also claim perfect immunity from every social as well as from every legal penalty. Let a man be as firmly convinced of the truth of religion as he will, he cannot, if he looks upon the scene before him with clear eyes and with an open mind, doubt that in the conflict between religion and science, in the progress of historical discovery, and in the failure of parts of the foundations on which hitherto belief has rested, there is an abundant explanation of the scepticism which fills the world. Nor is it less certain that among the sceptics, and among the most pronounced of them, are to be found men whose only object is truth, and who, when Christianity first appeared, would have been among the first to embrace Christianity. But, when Freethinkers demand that the religious offices of baptism, marriage, and religious ceremonies at funerals shall be abolished, and secular ceremonies shall be

substituted in their place, either they are indulging in insult or they show a total ignorance of the position. The same may be said of their demand that the community shall not provide religious instruction and comfort for criminals in the gaols. It is also absurd to require that the State shall formally adopt the economical views of Freethinkers and renounce the Christian doctrine respecting the tendencies of wealth. To think that society can be suddenly, and by word of command, revolutionized in its fundamental beliefs, or in the practices expressive of them, is, we repeat, a gross inconsistency on the part of those whose philosophy is gradual evolution. Even Mr. Herbert Spencer has admitted the inexpediency of hastily pulling down religious systems, with which popular morality is bound up, and the fact that the morality of Christian communities has hitherto been bound up with their religion surely cannot be denied. As Sir James Stephen himself, a thorough-going Freethinker, says, it is as certain as the connection of light with the sun.

AMONG all the marvellous varieties and kaleidoscopic combinations of opinion with which the age has teemed we have hitherto not had a Roman Catholic Rationalist. But we have one now in the person of Mr. Lilly, who is coming to the front as a writer. In his work on "Ancient Religion and Modern Thought," Mr. Lilly, identifying Roman Catholicism with Christianity, undertakes to give scientific reasons for the hope that is in him as a Catholic. He distinctly admits that religion, to command our allegiance, must be reconcilable with the revelations of science, with the conclusions of literary criticism, and generally with the dictates of reason. "Any faith," he says, "to which the facts of any science can be fatal, must die." He takes a most liberal view of the whole situation, expresses his gratitude in no grudging terms to Darwin and Spencer, and rejoices to think that he has much in common not only with the Lutheran but with the Deist; in fact, in the dialogue, of which part of the volume consists, an extreme sceptic appears under the most amiable and interesting aspect; it seems, also, that he dies tranquil, if not happy, in his scepticism. Not only Mr. Lilly's tolerance but his religious sympathy extends beyond the Christian pale, and he disclaims "any wish to disparage the great non-Christian systems which have done and are doing so much to meet the religious wants of human nature." It is on Butler's doctrine of certainty, as improved but not made more satisfactory to ordinary minds by Newman, that he takes his stand, and his argument is a demonstration of the insufficiency of anti-Christian systems, such as Pessimism and Materialism, rather than a demonstration of the truth of Christianity. By destroying rival creeds he seems to think that he leaves Christianity practically in possession of the field. One of the most curious parts of his book is his treatment of the Bible. He claims the privilege of free criticism, declaring that what is commonly called the orthodox view rests upon no decree of Pope or Council, and "that he is in no way obliged to believe, as a condition of Catholic communion, that all our sacred books were written by those whose names they bear, or at the dates commonly attributed to them, or that their human authors possessed in all cases accurate conceptions of the matters, whether of physical science or of secular history, upon which they had to touch." For himself he declares that these questions possess little interest; that he "regards the Bible as the creation of the Church"; that he receives the documents on her word, and that he should not receive them at all unless her authority moved him to do so. Thus he finds himself at liberty to combine Renan with the Council of Trent. "It is absolutely certain," he affirms, with what sounds to us a rather suspicious vehemence, "that the Church in her formal teaching makes no claims for the sacred Scriptures which are or ever can be at variance with the ascertained facts, whether of physical science or of exegetical criticism or of history." The absolute certainty is hardly apparent to those who have in their minds the cause of the Church's quarrel with Galileo. Are, then, the clergy as well as the lay inquirers at liberty to rationalize about the Canon of Scripture? "Suppose any Catholic priest should teach his people what, as I suppose, few competent critics doubt, that the Book of Judith is unhistorical, that the same must be said of the account of Alexander's death in Maccabees, that the book bearing the name of Daniel was written by some one else in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and that the Pentateuch is largely the work of Ezra—what would probably happen to that bold ecclesiastic?" To the question thus put by himself Mr. Lilly is obliged to reply that it would be little short of a miracle if the ecclesiastic escaped suspension *a sacris*. He adds that, in his judgment, apart from all questions as to the truth of the opinions, the ecclesiastic would richly deserve to be suspended. "His business is to watch for men's souls, not to unsettle their faith." We should have thought that his first business was to teach the truth; but the duty which Mr. Lilly would assign him is that of teaching practically every day of his life that which by competent critics