

the unification of Italy we have half forgotten that Metternich's saying, "Italy is a geographical expression," however offensive, was not untrue. The peninsula with its adjacent island, was inhabited by people of various races; and, though nominally comprehended in the German Empire of the Middle Ages, had not been really under one rule since the time of the Romans. The influences which, in the course of history, have acted upon the inhabitants of different Provinces have been as various as their origin and government. Both under Spanish and under Bourbon rule, the kingdom of Naples was singularly unfortunate. Calabria, from which a large proportion of these emigrants come, is to the rest of Italy what Connaught and Munster are to the rest of the United Kingdom. The population is backward in civilization, is uneducated, is sunk in superstition, and multiplies recklessly on a land which will not support it. It seems that to complete the unhappy parallel absenteeism prevails among the landowners. The Calabrians, however, appear to be good workers, and they are politically harmless; their thoroughly foreign character and ignorance of the English language are guarantees enough against their forming another Tammany. These poor exiles, therefore, may be welcomed without misgiving; in a happier land they will presently put off those parts of their character which lead them to eat unclean food.

THE two severest tests of national character perhaps are civil war and pestilence. The nation which preserves its humanity in civil war, and its presence of mind in pestilence, may be allowed to have established its claim to moral greatness. It cannot be said that the French have borne either of the tests well. Their civil wars, from the time of the Burgundians and Armagnacs down to the days of June, and the rising of the Commune, have been hideous orgies of ferocity; and now we see them at the approach of pestilence totally losing their presence of mind, and not only taking wildly to flight, but, in their delirium of alarm, attacking the physicians as propagators of the disease. Perhaps the people of Normandy would tell us that they are not to be pledged by the conduct of those of Southern France, in whom Montalembert still found, as he said, the evil traces of subjection to the Roman Empire, and whom Napoleon, after sweeping away their youth by myriads to fill his armies, graciously designated as *cette abominable population du midi*. The transcendent filthiness of the low quarters of Marsailles and Toulon may be assumed also to be connected with moral degradation. Among the Spaniards the trepidation seems to be as great as among the French: they are stripping naked, and sponging with disinfectants every traveller who presents himself at their frontier. Ethnology may see in this a confirmation of the theory that the Iberian race, like the Gallic, was a branch of the Celtic family. Another curiosity of the situation is the treatise of a man of science at Berlin, who, it seems, eulogizes the cholera as a beneficent instrument of natural selection, destined to remove the less desirable members of the race. This reminds us of a recent article in a popular journal of science, deprecating interference with intemperance on the same sociological ground. People hold up their hands in horror; but there is no reason to doubt the philanthropy or even the sensibility of either writer; nor is it easy to show, on the pure evolutionary hypothesis, why congenital disease or sickness should be preserved, or why agencies which weed them out of the human race should be regarded as scourges and repressed.

A BOOK by Renan is always an intellectual event, but his "New Studies in Religious History" is less of an event than anything that he has written before. The longest and most important of the essays is the one on Buddhism, that supposed rival of Christianity, the cardinal doctrine of which has, in the whirligig of intellectual revolution, curiously found its way into Europe, under the guise of the Possimism of Schopenhauer. A real rival of Christianity in the most essential aspect, Buddhism certainly is not, since it has produced nothing comparable to Christendom. In India, its original seat and the scene of its apparent triumph, it has utterly died out, while over the numberless millions outside India, who swell the nominal muster-roll of its adherents, it reigns with a languid sway, and has nowhere produced either an active religious character or anything that deserves the name of a civilization. The history of its foundation and the person of its founder, are so enshrouded in myth that doubts have been felt as to the founder's personality; but Renan seems to be right in saying that there are precepts, bearing the seal of a peculiar religious character, which attest the historic presence of a real and original teacher. Buddhism was evidently an insurrection against Brahminism and Caste. The Nirvana, which has been interpreted by some as annihilation, by others as absorption in God, is evidently an escape from endless transmigrations. It corresponds pretty closely to Schopenhauer's philosophic aspiration, which is, in effect, escape from consciousness; though the European conditions which

have produced Pessimism differ greatly from those which in India gave birth to Buddhism. Caste, however, proved to be too deeply rooted for subversion, and showed the invincible tenacity of social prejudice by completely triumphing over its heterodox assailant. So great a movement could hardly fail to leave some trace on the character of the people; and, perhaps, in the regions where Buddhism prevailed, it may have steeped in a deeper languor the quietism of the Hindoo. But a rival of Christianity, once more, it cannot be called, since it has produced no life or work which can be said in any way to rival Christendom. Even Monastic Christianity has been, or was, in its prime, energetic and fruitful, compared with Lamaism. Perhaps the most curious and important episode in the history of Buddhism is its sudden conquest of China, the last nation which upon a superficial view would have been thought likely to be fascinated by a Hindoo reverie. "Among the contrasts," says Renan, "which the infinite variety of the human mind presents, that of India and China is the most striking." Chinese society, from the earliest ages, has been founded on a basis purely human, without prophet, without Messiah, without revelation, without mythology, and has had no end in view but temporal well-being and the right organization of life in this world. The characteristic feature of the Chinese mind is its denial of the supernatural and the refusal to acknowledge the existence of anything which it cannot comprehend. Confucius was merely an economist and a moralist: when his disciples began to talk about religion, he asked them whether they knew enough about the things of earth to be busying themselves about the things of heaven. The contrast, says Renan, runs through literature and institutions, showing itself in the possession of political histories from an early date by the Chinese, while not a line of history has been written by the Hindoos. Yet Buddhism was received in China with enthusiasm. What caused the typically positivist community thus to be fascinated by the religious philosophy of the dreamy, speculative and mystical Hindoo? "Religious barrenness," says Renan, "often disposes to credulity: races of men devoid of religious originality are often predestined to believe and embrace everything." It may be so, but surely it is also open to us to ask whether we have not in the singular eagerness with which China received Buddhism, a proof that in any positivist and Confucian society there is a hidden want, and that the religious tendency of men, though suppressed and dormant, everywhere exists, ready to manifest itself as soon as religion presents itself to their view.

RENAN is a man of religious taste, but avowedly he is not a man of religious connection, so that we need not shrink from asking whether his perceptions of religious character are not sometimes at fault. When he suggests that the Raising of Lazarus may have been a pious fraud, we feel that, on any hypothesis, the suggestion is utterly revolting and inadmissible. But we also feel that his ethical judgment is astray when he sees in Francis of Assisi the nearest counterpart of Christ, and a fulfiller of the programme of Galilee. We may apply the same practical test which was applied in the case of the alleged rivalry between Buddhism and Christianity. What did Francis of Assisi create? A monastic order which in time went the way of all the rest of the orders and fell into corruption and torpor. What did Christ create? Christendom. Renan himself describes the character of Francis of Assisi as a product of the sweet and dreamy valley of Umbria. There is nothing dreamy about the character of Christ as presented in the Gospel, nor is there anything in it really ascetic; the missionary Teacher "has not where to lay His head," but His mode of living apparently is that of the people, and His mission commences at a marriage feast. Nor is there any trace of intellectual weakness in the character presented by the Gospel; whereas intellectual weakness, combined with a sort of seraphic sweetness, is the very essence of the character of Francis of Assisi. How can Renan think that the rhapsodical addresses of the Saint to his brother the sun, and his brother the wind, and his sisters the moon and the water, are the most beautiful religious poetry since the Gospels, and conceived in the spirit of the Gospels themselves? The Saint's love of animals, though amiable, is somewhat fatuous, and some of the miracles connected with it are positively silly. "Everything took in his hands a poetical and concrete turn. He lived in that state of mind in which is created the imagery which serves as the first basis for language or mythology. In a winter's night one of his disciples saw him go into the garden and make men of snow, saying to himself: 'There, that large one is thy wife; those two are thy sons; those two are thy daughters, and those other two the valet and the hand-maid. Make haste and clothe them, for they are dying of cold. But if so many cares are too much for thee, content thyself with serving the Lord.'" Surely this is not childlike simplicity such as is everywhere found in the Gospels, but childishness such as is not found in the Gospels at all.