

THE excitement caused at first by the Batoum incident has quite subsided: people soon recognised that England was not likely to send a fleet to open the port; and so the subject sank out of living interest. Nevertheless, the Czar's declaration that Batoum has ceased to be a free port is, in presence of the virtual promise to the contrary embodied in the Berlin Treaty, a high-handed proceeding; and his manner of making the announcement was extremely discourteous to the other parties to the Treaty, and especially England. But then the Czar, who seems, from the many blunders lately made by the Russian Foreign Office, to have taken much of its business out of his Ministers' hands, is not only a stupid man, but also a discourteous one; and he knew perfectly well that he could take any liberty with his friend Mr. Gladstone, who might send an able state paper in protest, but who would never resort to other measures than irrefragable arguments. The subject-matter, however, in this case is really not worth quarrelling about. Russia acquired Batoum by the Treaty of San Stefano; the late Czar set his heart on keeping the place; and so at the Berlin Conference England yielded—there being no help for it, indeed, short of breaking up the Conference, and, possibly, war. The Czar could not be openly thwarted; and therefore the concession was made to him, he, on the other hand, announcing his intention of making it a free port, and of never fortifying it on any pretext. This intention, however, has not been observed by the present Czar, who probably does not consider himself bound by his father's mere intentions: the work of fortifying Batoum was commenced as soon as Lord Beaconsfield's Cabinet went out of office; and the place having since become, with the connivance of the Gladstone Cabinet, a strong military port, advantage is taken of what will in all probability be Mr. Gladstone's last term of office, and of the feebleness of his Government, to formally throw off the restraints imposed by the Berlin Treaty. A Gladstone Government is Russia's opportunity—as it is of every enemy of Great Britain. In 1870, when England, under a Gladstone Government, had the Alabama difficulty on her hands and the Franco-Prussian war was raging, Russia tore up the Treaty of Paris; and, in 1886, England being plunged in confusion by Mr. Gladstone and his Irish allies, she tears up the Treaty of Berlin. But it appears by the Protocols of the Berlin Conference that the maintenance of the *status quo* as regards the Straits of Dardanelles was made by the British plenipotentiaries directly conditional on Batoum being declared a free port by Russia. Lord Salisbury declared, so runs the 14th Protocol, “that if the acquisition of Batoum had been maintained under conditions which would menace the liberty of the Black Sea, England could not have taken the engagement towards the other European Powers to interdict to herself the entry of that sea. But, Batoum having been declared a free and commercial port, the English Government will not decline to renew their engagements under the modifications imposed by the decisions already taken at the Congress.” And hence it follows that, if the declaration made by the Czar and embodied in the Treaty of Berlin is now to be revoked, England will be relieved of the collateral obligation to respect the closure of the Straits. There are many weighty causes of quarrel with Russia, and it may one day be necessary to fight her; and, if war come, this last step of Russia may prove to be a huge blunder. At present, however, there is no occasion for England to do more than silently note the fact that, whenever she sees fit, she has a right, indisputable by Russia, to send her ships through the Dardanelles.

MEANWHILE the practical lesson may be taken from these infractions of the Treaty of Paris and the Berlin Treaty, that it is useless to impose restrictions on a great Power which it is against her interest to observe. So soon as opportunity offers, she is sure to repudiate an inconvenient obligation. It was ridiculous to attempt to keep Russian war-ships forever out of the Black Sea: no independent Power could submit to such an indignity; and, therefore, Russia refused to submit to this. In like manner, to grant Russia full sovereignty over Batoum and yet limit her right to raise customs there was a mistake; for it could not be expected she would observe the restriction, or refrain from converting the commercial port into a military one, if it suited her purposes. The port is hers, and as a sovereign Power she must be allowed to do what she pleases with it; at all events she cannot be prevented. Only she ought first to have got the consent of the other Powers to the necessary modification in the Treaty confirming her title; and not having done this—as perhaps she would not have been able—it is quite legitimate for England to hold her to the consequences of the indiscretion of her ruler. Batoum having ceased to be a free port and having been fortified, England is expressly freed from the obligation to respect the neutrality of the Black Sea.

RUSSIA is excited and uneasy at rumours of the contemplated occupation by England of Badakshan, a district north-east of Afghanistan. The well-known Asiatic explorer, Colonel Prjevalsky, has been summoned to St. Petersburg to give his advice on the matter. Recently the *Kavkas*, which is the official organ of the Russian Government in the Caucasus, published an article which dilated upon the injury that would be done to Russian trade by a British occupation of Badakshan.

CIVILISATION must be in a more advanced state in Africa than has been supposed, for according to Lieutenant von Nimptsch's report on that district of Africa which he has just explored, one tribe was “remarkable for its joviality” and organised burlesque songs and dances in honour of the visitors.” Lieutenant Nimptsch was the first European ever seen in the district, so that it is plain that the African burlesque is indigenous; and only “advanced” nations are capable of appreciating burlesque.

ANY individual may be regarded as a very complex mingling of widely different bloods. To go no further back than the grandparents, he must be composed of at least sixteen different natures. It is not to be wondered at that such remarkable combinations should lead to great variations. The wonder seems rather to be that members of a family should resemble one another as much as they undoubtedly do. Sometimes in face, sometimes in form, frequently in the gait, gesture and tone of voice, family peculiarities make themselves apparent.

DR. DÖLLINGER, who is probably without a rival in comprehensive knowledge of history, writes thus to a friend in England: “Gladstone is to me a riddle, which I can solve only on the supposition that he knows little of Irish history, and still less of the character of the Irish people and of the spirit of the Irish priesthood. If he succeeds, what a frightful legacy will he leave to the generations which come after him! It is in truth the most threatening crisis which has occurred in England during the present century. God grant that she may surmount it happily.”

THE London *Spectator* presents a curious illustration of the glamour sometimes thrown over usually clear minds by Royalty. In reviewing “The Cruise of the *Bacchante*,” compiled from the journals, etc., of Prince Albert Victor and Prince George of Wales, it says of the vision of the “Flying Dutchman,” which the princes say they saw, that “it may not be so purely imaginary as it has generally been deemed.” Would the *Spectator* admit this if the supernatural appearance had been reported by any other two middies in Her Majesty's Service? But we dare say the *Spectator* has since grown more sceptical; for in its next number a correspondent points out that the royal midshipmen have in the “Cruise,” appropriated a long passage from Charles Kingsley's “At Last,” which they publish as their own reflections on the state of the West India Islands.

THE English army, says the *Civil and Military Gazette*, in addition to its other virtues, is the only one which knows how to cheer. Frenchmen shriek, Italians howl, Russians roar or sing as the case may be, and Germans shout, on occasions of excitement. The Englishman takes the trouble—being born of a methodical people—to articulate a distinct “hurrah,” which sound is known on the Continent as “Le British 'Orrai.” A correspondent is at some pains to point out that the Englishman's attempt to make the native [Indian] army cheer as he himself cheers, leads to strange and awful noises on State occasions such as the Queen's Birthday. “No wonder,” says he, “that the adjutant's horse, who has stood the trying ordeal of the *feu de joie*, sits down on his haunches in an agony of fear, while the adjutant himself, mindful of the regimental parade on the previous day, when he rehearsed the cheering ‘by numbers,’ abandons himself to tears.”

KARL BLIND, in an interesting essay in the *Neue Freie Presse*, denies that the ancient “Fenier” were Irishmen in the present sense of the word. “The old Irish Fenian heroes,” he says, “as we see them in the poems which have come down to us in the Celtic language, are evidently no Celts or Celt-Iberians. They are described as gold-haired, red-cheeked, blue-eyed, and white skinned. They drank beer out of drinking-horns.” He contends that no ethnographer will doubt that the men so described can have been of any other race except the German. The true “Fenians” were, consequently, Teutons—let us say “Saxons”—who forced their way into Ireland and filled it with their fame at some pre-historic date! But this conclusion does not rest on the ethnographical type of the Fenians