

General Miscellany.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, AUGUST 16.

THE TURKISH QUESTION.

Lord John Russell, after having presented certain papers regarding the relations of Foreign States with the Court of Rome, proceeded to say: Sir, I now rise to move that this House at its rising shall adjourn till Friday next. I have already stated that, before the prorogation of Parliament, I would endeavour to make some explanation to the House of the relations at present subsisting between Russia and Turkey. I have to thank the House for its forbearance during the present session, and, in anything that I might have to say, I shall not enter into anything that might be considered a defence of the Government, because the Government has not been attacked in this House. On the contrary, I think that every disposition has been shown by the House to leave in the hands of Her Majesty's Executive Government the conduct of the negotiations in this case. When the present Government entered into office, my attention was immediately called to the question of the Holy Places in Jerusalem by the Russian Minister at this Court, and I was told that the question was one of a very important nature, and would probably give rise to some anxiety. I immediately turned my attention to that subject, and the very day, I believe, on which I took the seals of the Foreign-office, I wrote a private letter to Lord Cowley, Her Majesty's Ambassador at Paris, requesting, as my predecessor had done, his earnest attention to that question. At a later period, I was informed by the Russian Minister that it was the determination of the Emperor of Russia to despatch a special embassy to Constantinople, with a view to put an end to the differences and complaints that existed upon the subject. The Emperor of Russia complained that certain privileges which had been enjoyed by persons professing the Greek religion at Jerusalem had been withheld, and that certain concessions which had been made by the Sultan had been withdrawn. It was, therefore, a legitimate object on his part to seek to obtain a settlement of those questions; and the Russian Minister stated that, as concessions which had been made at one time had been withdrawn at another, it was the object of the Russian Government, in some form or another, by some act of a solemn nature, to obtain a settlement of those differences which would not be liable to perpetual disturbance for the future. Of course, I could not object to a special mission from Russia to Constantinople. It is evident that no settlement can be satisfactory which does not include the evacuation of the Principalities. (Loud cries of "Hear, hear.") According to the declarations of which had been made by the general commanding the Russian forces, as also by Prince Menschikoff, that evacuation ought to follow immediately on satisfaction being obtained from Turkey by the Russian Government. (Hear, hear.) I will only say further, that we consider the object as settled; but with respect to the mode in which it is to be settled, and the end and object secured, I must ask the permission of Parliament to be required to say nothing further on that point, but to leave the means of obtaining that end in the hands of the Executive Government. (Hear, hear.) With respect to the question that has been raised about the fleets of France and England, it cannot be made a question of difficulty, because we ought to have it in our power, supposing Turkey to be in danger, to send our fleet into the Dardanelles to assist Turkey, and I cannot consent to any arrangement by which it may be stipulated that the advance of the fleets to the Dardanelles should be considered as equivalent to an act of invasion or hostility. (Hear, hear.) If these matters are all settled, and peace secured, Beiska Bay is not a situation of advantage for us to possess. With respect to anything further, I can only say that, whilst I regret not being able to state that the whole of these transactions are terminated, yet I do think there is a fair prospect that, without involving Europe in hostilities, the independence and integrity of Turkey—which, from the commencement of the session, I said to be the main object of Her Majesty's Government with regard to the affairs of the East—that object will be secured, and that in no long space of time, I am sure this House will feel, and the country will feel, that that object is to be secured by negotiation, and without involving Europe in a war, which is an object which

the country will value, and upon which we all have reason to congratulate ourselves. (Hear.) I am sure my noble friend at the head of the Government (the Earl of Aberdeen) may well console himself for any attacks that have been made upon him; and I am sure he will be able to attain his object by that mixture of moderation and judgment with which he has conducted these protracted negotiations. (Hear, hear.) I will only say that this question of the maintenance of Turkey is one that must always require the attention, the vigilant attention, of any Minister conducting the foreign affairs of the country. (Hear, hear.) I will say that such maintenance can only be secured by a constant union between England and France—(cries of "Hear, hear")—and by a constant and thorough communication between them. (Hear, hear.) I have now stated the general outline of past negotiations; I have likewise stated the present position of the question. I have not entered into argument on the question, because I do not think this is the proper occasion to do so. If hereafter, on the paper being laid on the table, any honourable member of this House shall think fit to advert the conduct of Her Majesty's Government, or the policy pursued by them on this occasion, in terms of censure, I shall be ready to meet that censure, and to defend the course now pursued. At present, I conceive it to be only necessary to give the House such a statement as is consistent with my public duty in the present state of this important question. (Hear, hear.) The noble lord was listened to amidst a silence uncommon in the noisy House of Commons. The cheers which were raised were heard better than any in the all but defunct session.

Mr. Layard considered that there had been a want of that energy and decision in these transactions which would have been infused into our proceedings by Lord Palmerston—the transactions, in his opinion, involving a great principle. He dwelt in much detail upon the indications of design and artifice on the part of Russia in her conduct towards Servia, Wallachia, and Moldavia, and denounced the proceedings of her ambassador at Constantinople. He deprecated the attempt to erect an independent Greek empire in Turkey, which, divided as Turkey was into antagonistical portions, would be broken up, like the Byzantine empire, by similar causes. The very moment that Constantinople passed from the hands of the Turks, British India would be in jeopardy. Mere assurances by Russia were not enough; she should have been called upon to disarm, and precautions should have been taken against her movements. Had she been told that if she entered the Turkish territories it would have been considered a *casus belli*, she would not have dared to cross the Pruth. Russia had now gained what she wanted; she had shown that she could enter Moldavia and Wallachia whenever she pleased with impunity, whereas those Principalities ought to be made, with Bessarabia, a barrier between her and Turkey. He believed that, without having fired a single shot, Russia had gained advantages which would have repaid a fierce campaign, while we had lowered ourselves in the eyes of all nations. The note prepared by Austria had been jumped at by Russia; if Turkey refused the terms, we must now join Russia against her, and if Turkey, under this terrible pressure, did accept them, we sanctioned the interference of Russia on behalf of 12,000,000 Greeks—not Greeks by nation only but by religion. Had the cases been reversed, and Turkey had invaded the Principalities, she would have been required not merely to evacuate them, but to pay all expenses, and make an ample apology; and nothing less would satisfy the ends of justice.

Lord D. Stuart disapproved of the conduct of the Government in these transactions, and censured with asperity the proceedings of Russia. If, he observed, we had had a Foreign Minister who was not a Minister of Russia or of Austria, but of England, none of these deplorable events would have occurred which had disturbed the tranquillity and endangered the peace of the world.

NUNNERIES BILL.

At a recent debate in the House of Commons on the Nunneries Bill, Mr. Drummond a prominent member of that body said:—

"It had been his own good fortune to number among his private friends and nearest relations many members of the Roman Catholic Church. He had, therefore, every sympathy in their favour. The

material part of this question was, however, the secular power assumed and never abandoned, never mitigated, never mollified at any time, by Rome and all its clergy in the lowest depth of its operations. The priests treated the laymen on the principle to which Montesquieu referred when he said, "They always put me in mind of the people of whom Herodotus speaks, who put out the eyes of their Scythian slaves in order that nothing might disturb them from churning butter" [a laugh]. He desired to say now what he had never condescended to say before; viz., that it was a gross libel on him to aver that he had ever said one word against the morality of English convents. While the clamour was going on he would not condescend to answer it; but he believed it had now pretty nearly gone down. What he really did say was, that on the continent these establishments had been made prisons, or had been put to infamous purposes by the priests. He could mention a hundred cases going over ten centuries, in which the opinions of popes, archbishops, bishops, and other persons of authority in the Roman Catholic Church had been given, all asserting the same thing; but the last which he had stumbled on was one which he hesitated about publishing because it was so strong—the testimony of General Dumourier who travelled to Portugal just before the French revolution. He did not deny that convents were often the means of conferring immense benefits—especially as regarded the education of young ladies. He held that altogether the religious works of Roman Catholics shamed those of Protestants. But he maintained that the priests taught children—when they had property—to insist on a conventional life in defiance of the will of their parents; and in addition to instances in his own family, he had received of late numerous letters complaining that ladies were absolutely stolen away. Behind all this was the fact, that convents were found to be one of the best possible means of collecting money [hear]. The Pope's Nuncio had distinctly declared to Sir Robert Peel that it was the intention of the Roman Catholics to deliver this country from the slavery under which Protestantism ground our souls. He did not quarrel with the Pope, or his Nuncio, or Cardinal Wiseman, for his resolution; but he was determined to fight that principle to the death [hear, hear]. He was determined to expose the doctrines of the priests; because he knew them to be subversive of morals, and because he knew it was impossible for priests to be loyal to a Protestant Sovereign [hear, hear]. He would remind the House that he had petitioned Parliament over and over again against the Catholic Relief Bill. He had been called a bigot for so doing; but he had lived to see the truth of his assertions coming to pass. As the Duke of Wellington said, it was only a case deferred; for it was now seen by their own acts that it was utterly impossible for slavers to a priesthood to be shares with Protestant freeman in conducting a Protestant Government [hear, hear].

IRISH PRIESTLY VIOLENCE.

It is well known that in the west of Ireland the missionary exertions of many of the Protestant clergy have been attended with remarkable success; that within the last few years a very large number of persons have ceased to attend mass, and have declared themselves on the side of Protestantism. Schools have been established in various places throughout the province of Connaught, attended by multitudes of children from families that at one time adhered to Popery.

One of the most successful of these schools was established in the town of Cong, and enjoyed the active and earnest patronage of the rector of the parish, the Rev. Edwin L. Moore. The schools, indeed, under the care of this excellent clergyman, were too successful to remain unmolested. Six Jesuit priests, selected for the work from the neighbourhood of Dublin, accompanied by six active *seculars*, came down on the town of Cong—a town, the dimensions of which are scarcely beyond those of an ordinary sized village. These Jesuits enlisted the Roman Catholic gentry in the neighbourhood to aid them in their object, by getting them to promise help to those parents or converts who might need it and accept it, and by engaging them to turn from their land those who might not yield to less violent means. Their efforts thenceforward was to get all information about every convert or child attending the school which could aid them in their design. They proclaimed "seven years' and seven times seven days' indulgence" to all who