

GREAT BRITAIN AND ISLAM.

A good deal of wonder is sometimes expressed at the friendliness shown by the British Government toward Turkey. Great Britain pre-eminently vaunts itself as a Christian Power. Yet it has for many years been the protector of Islam. Even under the administration of Mr. Gladstone Great Britain never failed to treat the Sublime Porte with marked consideration, far exceeding that shown toward other Powers of greater worth. At the present time, though confronted by the horrors in Armenia, Great Britain is reluctant to act severely, and perhaps would not act at all were she not forced to do so by France and Russia.

The reason for this apparently strange conduct is entirely simple, and is, from the point of view of practical politics, very strong. Great Britain is not merely a Christian Power. She is also the greatest Mahometan Power in the world. In her Indian Empire there are 57,000,000 followers of the Prophet, or more than all those in the Turkish Empire and the Persian Empire put together. These Mahometans are among the most loyal subjects of Victoria. They are also among the most intelligent and progressive of the Indian peoples. More than any others, they are influenced by European civilization and are putting themselves in touch with it. They read the political news of Great Britain, and follow closely the proceedings of the Imperial Parliament. They keep close and critical track of British policy in domestic, in Imperial and in foreign affairs. At the same time, of course, they look to Turkey as their spiritual fatherland, and to the Caliph as their spiritual head.

It is evident, therefore, that these millions of Indian Mahometans, now so loyal, would deeply resent any British aggressions upon Turkey that seemed to them unwarranted. A measure of just rebuke for palpable misdoings they might approve; but once let Great Britain attempt to enforce Mr. Gladstone's "bag and baggage" policy, once let it lead or join in or even sanction passively a Christian crusade against Islam, and the 57,000,000 would rise as one man in defence of their faith. Loyalty to Victoria as Empress of India would count as nothing when opposed to loyalty to Islam. There would be an uprising compared with which the Sepoy Mutiny would seem a petty brawl. It is the fear of such a catastrophe that makes British statesmen of Imperial rank so solicitous for the feelings and the welfare of Turkey.
