

SOVEREIGNS. No. 6.

PIUS IX.

THE amiable priest who sits in the chair of St. Peter has seen various fortunes and passed through every phase of popularity. As a temporal sovereign he has not been fortunate. At his accession to the Papal chair the most extravagant hopes were formed of his supposed intention to reform the administrative abuses of his secular Government; but these hopes were soon followed by the reaction which led to the Roman Revolution and the flight of the Holy Father to Gaeta, whence he only returned behind those French bayonets which have ever since maintained him. The fault, however, lies manifestly with the people and not with the Pope, for they believe in such things as representative institutions, freedom of religion, moral and scientific research, and other superstitions of civilisation; whereas he himself has told us that "they are in damnable error who regard the reconciliation of the Pope "with modern civilisation as possible or desirable."

Pius IX. has fallen into the hands of the Jesuits, who seek to lead, not only him, but through him the whole Catholic Church, and the pretensions they have raised have led to a serious contest, the issue of which will be decided by the Council now sitting, in deciding whether the Dogma of the Pope's absolute and universal infallibility is to be proclaimed. The prospect of assumption by the Pope of so novel a personal attribute may well disquiet the Church; yet it is after all but a small thing to concede in name what has for centuries been conceded in practice. The position that Faith is a virtue in itself is the basis of all religions, but in none other than the Roman Catholic is the corner-stone of the superstructure an avowed abnegation of Reason. This it is that gives that scheme a sufficiency and a consistency unknown in and impossible to be attained by half-hearted Protestantism, and after all the demands already made upon belief it is a comparatively insignificant addition to ask a belief in Papal infallibility, for, as a Jesuit professor has observed, "A thoroughly ignorant Pope may very well be "infallible, for God has before now pointed out the right road by the mouth of an " ass."