

# FROM MONTH TO MONTH

BY SIR JOHN WILLISON

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Some of the most influential newspapers of Canada oppose renewal of the alliance between Great Britain and Japan. There are also sections of British opinion which have always regarded the alliance with disfavour. It will be remembered that the first treaty with Japan was entered into during Great Britain's period of "splendid isolation". France was not too friendly, Russia was in league with France, and even closer to Germany than to Great Britain, there was smouldering if not active hostility to the British Empire at Berlin, and even at Washington there was at best a feeling of cold neutrality. There have been revolutionary changes in the relations of the great nations to the British Empire and to one another, but there are still powerful if not decisive reasons for a close understanding between Britain and Japan.

The position of Australia cannot be ignored. It would be idle to deny the power of Japan to make mischief in India or even to effect a dangerous alliance with Russia. Probably, too, Britain as an ally of Japan, has greater power to protect China than she would have if no actual alliance existed. There is no prospect that Britain will ever support Japan in aggressive action against the United States. This seems to be fully understood at Washington and at Tokio. Doubtless this understanding will be made more absolute in any renewal of the treaty if there is need for more definite reservations. It is true that Canada can have no interest in the Pacific, nor any relation with Japan even under Imperial engagements, which could separate Ottawa and Washington. If Canada is to interpret the British Empire on this continent the first and last letter of the condition is sympathy and co-operation between the Dominion and the Republic. As to this we may be certain that British statesmen have no illusion even were it not inconceivable that the Mother Country could consider any alliance which would hold the possibilities of conflict with the American people.

But as an ally of Japan Great Britain can be very powerful in promoting goodwill between Americans and Japanese and in maintaining happy relations between Japan and the British oversea Dominions. No alliance which stood the test of war can be lightly abandoned and one does not need to go far beneath the surface to find pregnant reasons against any action by Great Britain which would excite distrust at Tokio and breed the suspicion that interests hostile to Japan would henceforth control British world policy. There is nothing in conflict with the Covenants of the League of Nations in the British understanding with Japan. To refuse to renew a treaty which was respected by that country and which was never made an instrument of aggression would seem like a proclamation of distrust which Japanese statesmen would resent and which British statesmen could not explain in language which a proud and spirited people could easily accept as consonant with their dignity or their honour.