

is sometimes greater than the wisdom of their counsels. The French nation, as might be expected of a military nation, are keenly sensitive to any slight; they have not always avoided the mistake of supposing that any opposition to their cherished schemes must be the outcome of malevolence. They have ceased to think of war as the obvious means of furthering national interests; but they are by no means so pacific as the Anglo-Saxon peoples, who have hitherto dispensed with conscription. The foreign policy of France still strikes the average Englishman as too audacious and too restless. The French are less cautious than ourselves in counting the cost of foreign enterprises; what we call common prudence they would call want of spirit. And they are the more disposed to run great risks for relatively slight advantages, because they still believe that their national credit depends upon their foreign policy. The Minister of Foreign Affairs in a French Government is expected to pursue a policy which is not only safe and dignified, but something more. He must have a clear-cut programme, which holds out the promise of tangible results (for the French mind is attached to the concrete), and which at the same time is based upon some broad principle of right, or some far-reaching theory of the proper course of national development. Frenchmen do not demand that their foreign policy should be aggressive, in the sense of constituting a menace to other civilized states. But they are imbued with the idea that great states always are, and always must be engaged in competition, in a race for the acquisition of allies, of markets, of spheres of influence. They would feel humiliated if they thought that France was dropping out of the race from want of foresight, from timidity, or from lack of interest. It is not the