

THE EUROPEAN PEACE SOCIETY.

Germany Austria, and Italy form the true Peace Society of the Continent. If they will they can keep with ease the peace of the world. And they seem to be in that mind at present. Amid the various accounts which correspondents have sent to us of the purpose and results of the meetings at Gastein and Salzburg, of which probably they know about as much as the rest of us, one thing seems tolerably clear, that the German and Austrian Chancellors were not brought together with their most trusted assistants in the diplomatic work to discuss Roumanian railway bonds, or to exchange compliments and assurances of good will. The general impression in Europe is probably the sound one—that Germany and Austria have discovered that their interests in the East are identical, and that together they can maintain those interests against all by whom they may be assailed. We believe in the account which the *Kreuz Zeitung* gives of the object of the interviews and their results, not because the paper is supposed to be inspired and to convey the impression which the German Chancellor wishes to give to the world, but simply because it is the rational explanation. There is abundant reason for the meeting, and for the understanding which it is said to have established, in the present position of Europe. The plainest common sense dictated such an *entente cordiale* between the German and Austrian Emperors; and as strong common sense is Prince Bismarck's forte, we hold that it is idle to look further for the main reason of the meeting, or to hunt after subtle threads of policy, social or ecclesiastical when the political account of the matter affords a rational explanation of the whole.

In order to comprehend the situation, of which again the far seeing and prompt German statesman has made himself the master, we must remember that last year's campaign settled much more than the destinies of France and Germany for a generation at any rate to come. It really set the seal on the decisions of Sadowa, and confirmed the expulsion of Austria from Germany for good. Such an opportunity for Austria as the Franco-Prussian war afforded can never again recur. The fact that she found herself utterly unable to take advantage of it, and was compelled to stand by and watch the consolidation of Germany under the hegemony of Prussia, without means of resistance and without a word of protest, settled decisively the future of the Austrian Empire. German conquest has become for Austria for ever impossible, and she has now to set her face resolutely Eastwards, and adapt herself to the position which her very name has marked out for her by making the basin of the Danube henceforth her field. And now the alliance of Germany is of the largest importance to her. So long as she had an eye to German empire her interests in the East, were in a measure secondary. But now they are primary. On her Eastern frontier now her main dangers lie. Russia is her one formidable enemy. Fifteen millions of her population would be severed from her if the Russian Panschvie dream were to take shape and become a political power. Against Russia she needs a natural ally. That is an ally whose natural interests are identical with her own, apart from all sentiment of ambition or revenge. That ally she finds in Germany. To the new empire the freedom of the East is only less vitally important than to Austria; and, as we pointed out at the time

when Germany seemed to be coquetting with Russia, the policy of Germany must be inevitably determined by this natural interest, which on the Eastern question is, most happily for us and for Europe, also our own. An alliance with France to recover her lost position as a German power she can never even dream of again. Her own natural ally is the new empire. Bismarck has the power to trouble terribly her internal development, while the alliance with Germany would give her immense advantage in dealing with her discordant nationalities, which without such help she will hardly succeed in fusing into a whole.

On the other hand, Germany needs the alliance as strongly. It is perfectly understood in the Empire that France has one strong passion, for the indulgence of which she will strain every nerve—revenge. Russia is her natural ally; and it is always on the cards that France may give Russia *carte blanche* in the East, in return for an alliance against Germany, whose rapid growth has filled Russia with anxiety and alarm. In fact it is the one chance of France. Single-handed she can never cope with the Germans; and the alliance of France and Russia is really the one palpable danger in the future to the peace of Europe. Bismarck, seeing the danger clearly, has done his best to nip it in the bud. If the alliance is formed as reported, and Italy has acceded, he has achieved another, and this time a peaceful, triumph. France and Russia together are powerless against the forces which the three central Powers could bring into the field. In fact, Bismarck has drawn a cordon round France which will pinch her passion for revenge as sharply as the collar of steel around Paris pinched her pride. A belt of pacific forces through the centre of Europe can easily maintain the peace of the world when held by three millions of armed men.

And it is just the plainest interest of Italy to strike in at once and heartily with the great German powers. Italy has but one enemy in the world, but one thing really to dread.—French jealousy and ambition. And M. Thiers has most recklessly driven Italy into the arms of Germany by his confession that if he felt strong enough, he would set to work at once to restore the Pope. If Italy is to have Rome and hold it in peace, it must be under the shield of German alliance. France, by her deliberate indulgence of her jealous passion, the root of which is a vain ambition, has compelled Italy to seek security by an understanding with the power whom France has made arbiter of the destiny of the Continent. If the pact has been made, Italy will be able to maintain a firm attitude with regard to the religious houses in Rome which claim French protection, and which will be a painful source of trouble to the Italian kingdom until a clear understanding is arrived at. In every way but one the alliance will work happily for Italy; but it may possibly put some constraint upon her in her relations and dealings with the Pope. The *Times*' correspondent maintains that the leading question at the Conference has been ecclesiastical; that Prince Bismarck finds the Catholics in Alsace and Lorraine more troublesome than he anticipated, and hopes to manage them by inducing Austria to join him in putting a pressure upon Italy, with a view of improving the position of the Holy Father at Rome. It is possible, of course, but it seems most unlikely. It is but a few weeks since the Imperial Government took a decisive step against the Ultramontano party; and the German Chancellor is not the man to change his policy on a fundamental matter at a

month's notice. We believe that Italy has not much fear on that score. There is one real danger to the alliance, a very real one. It is that the monarchs may be haunted by the ghost of the Holy Alliance. If they dream that they can at once offer a firm front to France and Russia, and control by force the Liberal movement, which none of them love too well, their alliance will be broken in pieces by upheaval from beneath. That is the rock of danger ahead of them; if they can steer clear of that, they will do well; well for themselves, well for us Englishmen, and well for mankind.—*English Independent*.

MR. DISRAELI AT HUGHENDEN.

Mr. Disraeli presided at the Hughenden Harvest Home yesterday. In proposing "The health of the Queen," the right honourable gentleman said—The health of the Queen has for several years been a subject of anxiety to those about her, but it is only this year that the country generally has become acquainted with the gravity of her condition. I believe I may say that there is some improvement in her Majesty's health but I fear a long time must elapse before it will reach that average condition which she has for some time enjoyed, and I do not think that we can conceal from ourselves that a still longer time must elapse before her Majesty will be able to resume the performance of those public and active duties which it was once her pride and pleasure to fulfill, because they brought her into constant and immediate contact with her people. The fact is, we cannot conceal from ourselves that her Majesty is physically incapacitated from performing those duties, but it is some consolation to her subjects to know that in the performance of those much higher duties which her Majesty is called upon to perform, she performs them with a punctuality and a precision which have certainly never been surpassed and rarely equalled by any monarch of these realms. A very erroneous impression is prevalent respecting the duties of a sovereign of this country. Those duties are multifarious. They are weighty and they are increasing. I will venture to say that no head of any department of the state performs more laborious duties than fall to the Sovereign of this country. There is not a despatch received from abroad nor sent from this country abroad which is not submitted to the Queen. The whole of the internal administration of this country greatly depends upon the sign manual; and of our present Sovereign, it may be said that her signature has never been placed to any public document of which she did not know the purpose of which she did not approve. Those cabinet councils of which you all hear, and which are necessarily the scene of anxious and important deliberations are reported and communicated by the Minister to the Sovereign and often call from her remarks critical and requiring considerable attention; and, I may venture to say this, that no person likely to administer the affairs of this country would treat the suggestions of her Majesty with indifference. The right honourable gentleman proceeded to eulogise the conduct of the Queen throughout her reign as a constitutional sovereign. She linked the past generation of statesmen with the present. There never was one more jealous of her prerogative, which she believed was given to her for the good of her people. In the rest of his speech, Mr. Disraeli referred to the harvest, kitchen and flower gardens, and similar subjects.