

were most distasteful. Not that Italian feeling was opposed to the Serb aspirations ; on the contrary, it is likely that Italy would look with kindness on a union of Serbia and Montenegro, which would form a powerful bulwark against Austria. But Italy could never tolerate any other Power in Albania. Hence her opposition to the Serbs : hence, also, her objections to single Austrian action against Montenegro at Scutari, and her preference of a concerted effort by all the Powers to settle the Albanian question.

But it may be said with some safety that the events of the last year have changed the situation in Italian eyes. Her natural antagonism to Austria is unchanged, but the other factors in the general European system, that made that antagonism count for little, have been greatly modified. The balance of power in the Balkans has altered altogether. The German plans to increase the power of Bulgaria and Turkey have completely failed ; Roumania—half Latin and half Slav—has broken away from German leading-strings, and in conjunction with Greece forced a settlement last year that left both Turkey and Bulgaria weakened and impoverished. It is now impossible to deny or to stultify the claims of the Slavs and Greeks to expansion ; it might be perhaps easier to transact a bargain with them, possibly through the medium of their natural allies of the Triple Entente. Tripoli is a problem no more : France and Great Britain have recognized the Mediterranean interests of Italy to a great extent, and possibly it would be to their profit to give these interests yet fuller scope. Albania is still in disorder ; Italy may look with favour on the claims of Essad Pasha, in default of a better, to rule free Albania, but there are no signs that Austrian influence could be usefully employed to check Greece or Montenegro. Italy