

in a state of weakness. France, however, did not allow herself the dangerous luxury of translating her natural resentment into action. There was, it is true, a prospect of a new Franco-German war in 1875; but it arose from a feeling, which prevailed in German military circles, that France had been let off too lightly in 1871, and that it was advisable to 'bleed her white'. War was averted by the intervention of Russia and of England; and Bismarck's apologists now allege that he never intended to do more than scare the French out of any thoughts of revenge which she might still be harbouring. Whatever his intentions, he had certainly acted in such a way as to give France every reason for strengthening her defences and for watching the slightest move of Germany with deep suspicion.

(2) In 1881 the French showed the world that they had at last recovered confidence and strength. That year saw the French occupation of Tunis and the beginning of the new colonial policy which, from that date to 1904, was the main interest of French statesmen. For twenty-three years France was engaged in acquiring and developing tropical or sub-tropical territories, partly in Africa and partly in the Far East. These new possessions were, and are, as Bismarck once sardonically remarked, 'colonies without colonists'. Since she lost Canada in the eighteenth century France has never aspired to become, like Great Britain, a mother of new nations. Indeed, if she had the aspiration, she would find it difficult to provide the emigrants, or to secure a land in the temperate zones where they could settle. But both in Africa and in Asia she has copied with remarkable success the model afforded by the Indian Empire.

At the fall of Napoleon there remained to France, of all the colonies which she had established in the seventeenth