

16 GERMANY AND THE 'FEAR OF RUSSIA'

its action was a still more unpleasant surprise for them. A victorious Balkan League was likely to prove a very formidable obstacle to Austro-Hungarian expansion to the Aegean Sea ; and Germany's prestige at Constantinople was specially affected by the fact that it was she who had made herself largely responsible for the organization and even for the equipment of the defeated Turkish armies. Germany, therefore, was quite ready to co-operate as peacemaker with Great Britain. The British Government was chiefly concerned to put an end to the war lest it should spread beyond its local limits. The German Government reckoned that, once peace was signed with Turkey, the Balkan League would quarrel over the division of the spoils and fall a prey to internal dissensions. It proved an accurate calculation. Russia tried at the last moment to defeat it by offering to act as arbitrator between the Balkan States. Serbia, whose exorbitant demands had gone far to provoke the conflict, could not reject the Russian proposal, for she, more than any other Balkan State, was dependent, in the last resort, upon Russian protection. But at Sofia the influence of the Germanic Powers prevailed, and King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, whose ambitions were still more inordinate, would not hear of arbitration, and himself cut the Gordian knot by initiating hostilities against his Serbian neighbours. Once more, the result was not what Germany or Austria-Hungary had expected and hoped. For Rumania, who had hitherto been regarded as a satellite of the Germanic Powers, suddenly emancipated herself from their influence. Under the pressure of her armies, as well as of defeats inflicted upon the Bulgarian armies by both Serbia and Greece, Bulgaria was compelled to acknowledge herself beaten ; whilst with Greece, Serbia, whom Austria had flouted