

occupation in the Aegean Islands. But it was no doubt the prospect of imminent warfare in the Balkans which chiefly induced the Italian Court to seek the shortest cut out of the Turkish War and to seek an understanding with Austria. With Great Britain Italy was on friendly terms in every sphere, with France a clear agreement was come to (October 1912) in regard to Morocco and Libya, but both Great Britain and France were the allies of Russia, the protector of the Balkan Slavs, and it was the vision of a great advance by Slavs or Greeks to the Adriatic which filled Italy with misgivings. In October 1912 Count Berchtold and the Marquis di San Giuliano agreed to maintain, so far as possible, the *status quo* in the Balkans—Italy, it would seem, promising to help Austria in preventing a Servian advance in Albania, while Austria undertook to check Greek pretensions in the north of Epirus or on the vital harbour of Valona. The overwhelming success of the Balkan League between October and December 1912 no doubt surprised Italian diplomacy, as it did all Europe. To a great extent acceptance of the accomplished fact was forced on the Triple Alliance, for it was impossible to refuse the demands of four peoples in arms and intoxicated with victory. It is improbable that Italy played any part in the successful intrigue of the German Powers to divide the League, to set Bulgaria against her allies, and to save Adrianople, from which Turkey might fight another day. But when in December Austria mobilized to force the Servians to leave Albania alone, and early in 1913 advanced the scheme of an independent Albanian principality, Italy felt bound to join her. The Montenegrins were all this winter besieging Scutari, and hoped to annex it; if that was more tolerable to Italy than to Austria, the Servian claims on Alessio, Durazzo, and S. Giovanni di Medua