

unnoticed, or that the weapon or manœuvre which may be most effective to-day may to-morrow be found worthless in the presence of some new invention. It certainly must be far from reassuring to the British tax-paying public, after lavishing year after year untold millions upon the navy, to find that a mere playing at war reveals little more than a series of defects, blunders, and breakdowns.

CAN it be that the dark war-clouds which have been so long lowering over Europe are about to lift and scatter without bringing the dreaded deluge? So Lord Salisbury, at least, seems to think, and few men are better qualified to judge. He has declared, in a recent speech, that all the rulers of the world are now seeking peace. Whether the British Premier speaks with somewhat more than conjectural knowledge of the tenor of the interviews which have lately taken place between the mightiest potentates of Europe, can, of course, be only guessed. His words, if correctly reported by cable, are, to say the least, not inconsistent with the supposition that he has had a glimpse behind the scenes. The principal statesmen of Europe are, he says, beginning to think that the best thing to do with Bulgaria is to leave her alone. To the uninitiated this seems not only a wise conclusion, but one so exceedingly simple that the wonder is it should have taken wise men so long to reach it. Unfortunately, Lord Salisbury does not seem able to say with absolute certainty that those upon whose action most depends have even now reached it. For England he can vouch; but no one, we fancy, ever suspected England of any design upon Bulgarian autonomy. For Germany and Austria, too, he ventures to speak, though in a tone of modified confidence; but neither of these nations has shown any special anxiety to interfere with Bulgaria, save by way of counter-check to Russia. And in regard to Russia's readiness to accept the let-alone policy, Lord Salisbury only "hopes," though lovers of peace will be tempted to suspect that the hope may have a more direct and reliable source than even the recent declaration of M. de Giers, that Russia had washed her hands of Bulgaria.

To be let alone is no doubt what the Bulgarians chiefly desire. Nevertheless, it may be considered pretty certain that if they are eventually left free to work out their own uncertain destiny, they will have to thank the mutual jealousy and dread of the Powers rather than their disinterestedness or magnanimity. They certainly will have little reason to feel grateful to Russia, which has manifestly done everything possible, short of open hostilities, to compel the abdication of Alexander, as she did compel that of his predecessor. If, however, through any causes or influences the long and formidable preparations for war in Eastern Europe should be succeeded by a lasting peace, without the intervention of actual conflict, the phenomenon will be one of the most remarkable in history, and one full of encouragement in regard to the future. Never before, it may safely be affirmed, have such tremendous armaments been equipped and marshalled by three contiguous nations. If Russia, Germany and Austria, after thus arming themselves to the teeth and glaring at each other across the frontiers for so many months, can compose their differences and withdraw in good faith, there will be excellent reason to hope that on the next occasion they will take counsel together before going so far in the way of expensive and menacing preparations. Grant, even, that Russia has been the chief aggressor, and that nothing but the strength and determination of her powerful rivals have compelled her to relinquish her purpose, why may not even Russia lay to heart a lesson learned at so much cost, and profit by it in the future?

BUT what of France, restless, mercurial, spasmodic France? It would almost seem at times as if France were in danger of losing her prestige as one of the Great Powers, and ceasing to count as a force in European politics. What with her Boulangist crazes, communistic riots, and vacillating and sometimes meddlesome foreign policy, France seems to be preparing herself for a period of isolation and weakness. In a nation, as in an individual, one of the prime conditions of strength is self-control. Until France learns to govern herself, to know her own mind and let other nations see that she knows it, she will have to be content with second, or even lower place. The art of self-government, which she has as yet not more than half learned, will need to be thoroughly mastered before she can again wield her legitimate influence among the councils of the nations. It must be admitted, however, that in the recent disturbances the Floquet Administration showed unexpected promptness and firmness, though there is reason to fear that the end is not yet. Foreigners are also too apt to forget that most of the absurdities which from time to time provoke ridicule or contempt belong to Paris, and Paris is not France. The indications

now are that before many weeks the French Ministry may be called on by Germany to declare her intentions or reduce her armaments. If so, upon her answer to that demand the gravest issues may depend. It is evident that William II. of Germany is prepared for anything in preference to a policy of *laissez faire*, and that his restless energy will shortly bring matters to a crisis of some kind. The diplomatic dispute now in progress with Italy seems to be waxing hotter, but it is highly improbable that the French Ministry will at this juncture, in view of their uncertain relations with Germany, be rash enough to precipitate a quarrel with Italy, especially one in which the sympathy of the nations will incline to the latter.

If anything were wanting to show how completely the project of Imperial Federation is outside the range of practical politics in Canada, the want was supplied by the outspoken declarations of the three French Canadian Members of the Government, at the Joliette meeting the other day. The Secretary of State and the Minister of Public Works vied with each other in the distinctness and emphasis with which they pronounced against the scheme as dangerous to Canadian liberties, while even the Minister of Militia who, as representing the military sentiment to which the proposed Federation especially appeals, might be expected to regard it with special favour, considered the question as not ripe for discussion. These utterances conjoined with those of the Premier of Quebec on former occasions, may be taken to represent the unanimous sentiment of the French Canadians of the Dominion. However much it is to be regretted that the opposition to this or any movement should thus assume a racial aspect, the fact itself is too significant to be ignored. It is difficult to see how the most sanguine friends of Imperial Federation can think it worth while to continue the advocacy of a scheme which, it is clear, would have arrayed against it at the outset, all the French Canadians in the Confederation in solid phalanx. Success, under such circumstances, could hardly be possible, save at the cost of disruption, or civil war.

M. WADDINGTON, the French Ambassador in England, must surely be an optimist of the first water. His speech at a recent Lord Mayor's banquet entitles him to high rank amongst the few who have the happy faculty of extracting encouragement from the most unpromising material. In friendliness of tone and assurance of the good-will of his country towards Great Britain, M. Waddington's speech left nothing to be desired. It would be, indeed, a happy augury of peace, were it the fact, as M. Waddington conceives, that, in these days, not kings or cabinets but only peoples have it in their power to say whether or not there shall be war. But whatever truth there may be in the statement in regard to France and England, with which the speaker was particularly concerned, one can hardly cast his eyes farther eastward in Europe without perceiving that the tremendous issues of peace and war are still in the hands of diplomats and dynasties. It is, however, when M. Waddington extracts a prophecy of universal peace from so sinister an omen as that afforded by the perfection which is being reached in the manufacture of instruments of war that his optimistic tendencies appear at their best. The argument is far less original than fanciful. It would, certainly, seem nearer the sober fact to infer that every new explosive and every improved engine of destruction increases the chances of war and brings it nearer, through the natural eagerness of the nation which controls the innovation to test its efficiency and reap the advantage its possession affords. It may be hoped that M. Waddington speaks more by the card when he declares that the majority of the French people now love peace and hate war. If this be so, the fact goes far to ensure European peace for many years to come.

LONDON LETTER.

THE other night, sitting not far from Christopher Sly, (old Sly's son, of Burton Heath, you will remember: the small village on the road from Stratford to Oxford) who, a little above us, on the boards, lounged with his page-wife in the fine chairs drawn to one side, just where Hogarth sketched the Duke of Bolton and the rest of the blue-ribboned noblemen, applauding Polly Peachum, I listened to the words of the pleasant queer comedy in which Petrucio, that roaring swashbuckler from Alsatia, is the most odious of heroes, and, as I listened, I pitied Sly rolling from off his chair at the end of the first act, with never a chance of seeing Katharine the curst, Kate the Shrew, with whom are all one's sympathies from the first, I think. From her stormy entrance to that last most admirable speech (which all wives should learn by heart), Miss Rehan astonished and delighted, vexed and amazed, but bored me, never, and to her alone an English audience looks for the main interest of the play. Curiously