

both countries that their Asiatic interests, hitherto the main cause of disputes, were by no means irreconcilable. In 1905 England acted as a mediator between Russia and Japan; in 1907 England and Russia came to an agreement respecting their claims in Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet. Finally, in 1909, the Tsar paid a ceremonious visit to England; and from that moment the Triple Entente became a new and vital factor in the European situation. The immediate effect was that France found herself able to concentrate practically the whole of her fleet in the Mediterranean, where it would be ready to defend her North African colonies. For it was understood that, if the three powers found themselves jointly engaged in a war against a common enemy, Russia would guard the interests of her allies in the Baltic, and England would be responsible for holding the North Sea and the English Channel.

There can be no doubt that the Triple Entente has operated as a bar against some cherished hopes of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Since 1909 it has been the fixed intention of Germany, if not also of Austria-Hungary, that France should be made to pay heavily for her presumption in building up this coalition. Apparently Germans think that the Triple Entente exists largely, if not entirely, to thwart German colonial ambitions, and to promote those of France.

To such suspicions we can only answer that no proof of them is offered, and that they are not confirmed by any facts which are generally known. There is evidence that French statesmen have feared a war with Germany as one of the greatest evils that could befall their nation. There is evidence that France has been relatively less prepared than Germany for the present war. We do not contend that France has pursued