

is to vote the money for the war, is another. Whether moral or effective, outside the official journals, that, of course—chorus there is nothing like leather, there appears to be less enthusiasm for the alliance than ever. The apprehension is real, that some quarrel between Russia and Austria or Russia and England may drag France instantly into the pending war, whose nearness few persons now doubt. In what way Russia can practically aid France, no one can see; but every one can clearly perceive what will be the consequences if England joins the full triple alliance.

For the moment, opinion awaits the Salisbury Cabinet at work, and concludes that his Lordship will execute no *coup* of the "Britons strike home" character, till he has negotiated with Austria and Turkey for the defence of the Balkans against the Russian aggression; with an alliance of the quasi-neutral class with Norway, Sweden and Spain. Germany will be negotiated with, it is said, the moment England signs the acceptance of her conditions. In the meantime the Russian press endeavors to crack the French up by holding out the annihilation of England, and securing the evacuation of Egypt. The French do not dance to this music. It is well known that Lord Salisbury will put an end to the little humiliations of England, and nagging her policy. The wholesome truth has taken root on the continent, that England is quite prepared for war, should the calamity be inevitable, and that her foes will not be allowed to choose their hour or their ways and means.

Japan stipulates that the sixteen million sterling, the part indemnity to be paid her upon quitting Manchouria, to allow her to be replaced by Russia, are to be deposited in a London bank, the one-half of the sum to be expended in building iron clads for her new navy, in British dockyards. England and Japan are compelled to join fleets in the Chinese seas, to prevent the latter being made a Russian lake, as England and Italy have united to keep the gangway clear in the Mediterranean. People who become fussy respecting commercial treaties executed between China and Russia and France, forget that their privileges become enjoyable by every favoured nation—England, of course. As for railway, telegraph, etc., concessions, these can be obtained now from China for the asking. The danger lies in squeezing territory out of China, and there is where Russia will be confronted by England and Japan. It is to be hoped that Lord Salisbury will keep the Cromwell-Hotspur policy of the Germans before his eyes. Then he will have peace. It is said that Lord Cromer, when he returns to Egypt, will put his foot down on the cliques banded and worse tolerated to oppose and belittle the efforts of England in Egypt. The joke has been allowed to continue too long.

The French have not yet quite recovered from their surprise at the triumph of the Unionist party at the general elections; it is a blow of a Nasmyth hammer to all the foreign adversaries of Britain, open or concealed. The que of the French press now is to allege—it is useless attempting to sow jealousy between the Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Salisbury. A child ought to know that card is valueless. The new Cabinet will make England respected and feared abroad; they will advance the work of imperial federation—ends naturally that her rivals deplore. But it's "got to be done," and foreigners know it will be done—by acts not windbagism.

The terrible railway accident at Saint Brienc, near Nantes, resulting in 11 deaths and 30 wounded, the latter all severely, presents this astonishing circumstance that after the fullest professional and juridical inquiry it was unanimously agreed that there was nothing to explain the cause of the catastrophe even after investigating all possible conjectures. The two engines collided in a limestone cutting and then burrowed into the rock; the carriages did not telescope, but rather each stood up on end in the air. The steam and fire made short havoc of the sufferers. One man lay on the top of a turned up carriage, hands spread out and head peering over; the breakdown gang shouted to him not to stir, that ladders were coming and he could get down easier. He made no reply. On applying the ladder the man was but the moiety of a corpse, the other half could not be found. The scalding steam and hot iron bars quickly terminated the agony of the sufferers wedged between the debris of the carriages.

Opinion is very gloomy respecting the Madagascar expedition; that the troops suffer from the climate is accepted. The poor fellows that have been sent back to France show the deadliness of the real foe, a kind of "rheumatic dysen-

tery" and irritable low fever. News comes in but slowly and the army does not appear to be advancing on Tananarive. In October the floods set in and if the French are caught where they are now and compelled to winter very few can fight the season. In spring the campaign would have to be recommenced with double the cost in men and money, while the military prestige of France would suffer under the head of bad organization. The expedition must go forward *conte-qui-coute*. But indignant opinion will demand some functionaries heads. Bad as the event may turn out it will point a moral: the necessity of that *ignis fatuus*—grabbing territory under high pressure with the certainty of never being utilized—being frankly abandoned. But the old Adam still lingers, as "the looking big on the map of the world" party calls upon the Government to at once occupy the contested territory between French Guiana and Brazil till the boundaries be fixed. The commander of the troops in Guiana recommends that if necessary a French squadron be sent to threaten Rio-de-Janeiro to hasten matters. It would be millions well expended. As to the prudence of threatening Rio that is an opinion, but the commander's vigor is to be recommended. It is worthy of note that the tendency of the big powers is rapidly leaning to action and it would be well for England to study well the lesson—her motto henceforth ought to be—*Semper paratus*—she constitutes a splendid empire, always to sack—by rivals.

Perhaps Tonkin is the test colony of France, because it is within the last nine years it has been conquered by the French and they have had a free hand to introduce all modern notions about colonization. M. Le Houx in his book just published depicts Algeria as a lamentable failure for his country. An officious correspondent of the *Temps* writes from Tonkin: that the prosperity of the colony must depend on its agriculture; that there is no use coming to the country to set up as cultivator unless possessed of a capital of 25,000 frs. That sum cannot be raised as no insurance company will accept a life in Tonkin, and a lender has thus no guarantee for his loan in case the borrower dies. Between 1887 and 1894 the European population has risen from 961 to 1910; the natality—always Europeans—has been 324 and the deaths 661. Colonists for Tonkin, remarks the writer, would require to possess not only capital but energy, activity, uprightness and intelligence. In the 1,910 Europeans the writer does not state how many are civil servants and how many emigrant farmers—now all the question is there—till supplied, it is Hamlet without Hamlet.

M. Monnier is an experienced Asiatic traveller, and is globe-trotting through Annam. He was surprised to find the word tram in use with the Annamites. It does not mean a tramway, but a posting-house, not for horses, but for changing carriers, or coolies. A coolie is paid half a franc for trotting with palanquin, or baggage, during twelve miles. When crossing rivers or penetrating into glens at nightfall, the tram boys obtain light by setting fire to the brushwood. The coolies climb like cats. At the wayside inn, sweet potatoes, salt-fish and rice wetted with tea constitute the uniform menu. While trotting the coolies discuss family affairs, and if they meet a pretty girl they embrace her and press her to their hearts. At every pagoda, the coolies stop, burn propitiatory paper on the altar containing vows, to be preserved from wayside tigers and other disagreeable *rencontres*. Every village is crowded with children and pigs; the latter having a hollow back and triple chins, while the abdomens train on the ground. Herds of buffaloes are to be met with in charge of a mere child. The animals look wild, but are not, as the drover, when fatigued, jumps on the back of one of them and stretches himself at full length. When the buffalo enters a marsh-pond to become cool, the herd keeps on the back all the same, his own and the animal's head alone being above the water. The natives drink tea only and smoke cigarettes, where a lotus leaf does duty for paper. Arrived at Huc, the capital, the traveller accepted the assurance that was the "city," though he could see no houses save a collection of bee-hive structures in rushes and citizens in rags.

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We understand that Mrs. Humphry Ward's famous "Story of Bessie Costrell," a very powerful and intensely dramatic story of a woman's temptation and her degradation, is about to be dramatized, and will be put upon the stage of one of our prominent theatres this fall.

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