

Remembering then that, in a Frenchman's eyes, there is a world of difference between activity and aggression, between stealing a march upon a rival and aiming a blow at his existence, between winning a race and inflicting an injury, let us attempt to form some judgement of French foreign policy in the last forty years or so. Has it been aggressive? Has it carried competition to the point of wanton and unforgivable provocation? Has the mainspring of it been the desire to revenge upon the German Empire the disgraces and the losses of 1870? Or has it aimed at restoring French prestige, in a less dangerous way, by discovering and developing new fields for French influence? These are questions which cannot be answered with dogmatic confidence until the archives of all the Great Powers have been thrown open. But they are questions on which it is important that we should form a provisional judgement from such material as is available. For they concern the honour and the trustworthiness of a cherished ally.

These questions can best be answered in a brief historical survey. It is a complicated story that we have to tell; but it becomes simpler if one observes that there are three well-marked phases through which French policy has passed since 1871; and that in each successive stage there is one national interest which exercises a predominating influence upon the minds of French statesmen and determines their attitude towards other powers.

(1) From 1871 to 1880 the key-note of French statesmanship was expressed in the words, *Recuperation and Reorganization*. In these years the Republic, as it exists to-day, was founded and endowed with a fixed constitution. The Republic rapidly paid off the enor-